
THREE
DISCOURSES:

ONE, A
Defence of Private Judgment;

THE SECOND,
Against the Authority of the Magistrate
over CONSCIENCE;

THE THIRD,
Some Considerations concerning the Re-
uniting of PROTESTANTS.

THE HISTORY OF THE

THIRD

DISCOVERY

OF A

Remedy of Private Judgment

THE SECOND

Against the Authority of the Holy Scriptures
OF CONSCIENCE

THE THIRD

OF THE CONSCIENCE OF THE
PROTESTANTS

IN THE YEAR 1643

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The Two first Translated from the *Latin*, the
Third from the *French*, of Dr. *Samuel Werenfels*,
Professor of Divinity in the University of *BALE*,
in *Switzerland*. K

With a Prefatory Epistle to the Reverend Dr. *TENISON*,
giving an Account of the Occasion of Translating them, and
their Use in the Bishop of *BANGOR*'s Controversy.

By *PHILELEUTHERUS Cantabrigiensis*.

*Cum me Credere Vis nihil probare,
Nil Credo tibi. Cur? Rogare noli,
Annon Hoc satis est, superq; causa,
Quod me Credere vis, nihil probare?*

*Ignoscite, Principes. si qui, metu Damnationis, vobis in Religione non
assentiuntur; Potestisne illis de damno cavere?*

LONDON, Printed for *James Knapton*, at the Crown,
in *St. Paul's Church-Yard*. 1718.

Price One shilling.

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The Two last Discourses from the Latin the
Third from the French of Dr Samuel Butler
Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford
in England.

By John Wallis, M.A. Secretary of the Royal Society
and Master of the University of Oxford



LONDON: Printed for J. Wallis, at the Church-Yard, 1713.

Can be had of the Author, who is now
in the City of Oxford, at the
University of Oxford, in the
Library of the University, and
in the Library of the
University of Oxford.

LONDON: Printed for J. Wallis, at the Church-Yard, 1713.

THE
PREFATORY EPISTLE

To the Reverend

Dr. TENISON.

Honoured Sir,

YOU were pleased some time ago to make me a Present of two Books, of the Famous Dr. Wrenfels, viz. *Sylloge Dissertationum Theologicarum*, And his *Sermons* in French, to which are annexed *Some General Considerations concerning the Re-nuiting of Protestants*. I own my self very much obliged to you for bringing me acquainted with so Judicious and Instructive a Writer, to whom I had else probably continued a Stranger. His Treatises are wrote with so much Solidity and Judgment, so much Candor and Sincerity, and such a Spirit of Charity and Piety, that there are few Books, which better deserve to be carefully perused.

But of all his Treatises none pleased me more than those in which with great Clearness and Strength of Argument the Fundamental Doctrines of the Reformation are asserted and defended.

After so many excellent Defences of it by the most Learned and Able Divines that perhaps have ever appeared in the World, since Inspiration ceased; 'tis

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not a little surprizing to see some Divines of great Name, who, whilst they profess themselves Protestants, not only secretly undermine; but also openly use their Endeavours to destroy the Foundations of Protestantism; and in express words recant that Principle, without which this Church (which they so limit and confine, as to esteem none but themselves to be true Members of it) could never have been in being.

This they have taken occasion to do in opposition to the Writings of a Bishop, the Glory and Ornament of our Times and Nation: Than whom no one since the Reformation has done more sincere, or more useful Service to the Church of Christ; than whom, as no one has greater Abilities, so no one has a readier Will, to promote true Religion, free from Superstition and Enthusiasm, free from Hypocrisy and Force; and to set the *Worship of God* on the only firm Foundation on which it can stand, a willing Mind, unforced Assent, and unfeigned Sincerity. They have taken occasion to do it in opposition to those Writings of His, in which he has solidly and clearly confuted the Nonjurors, who have left our Communion and Pure Christianity together, on the only Principles on which they can be confuted: Those, who to advance themselves to THRONES, from which their Ancestors near Two hundred Years ago pulled down Anti-christ, have if not dethroned Christ, yet made themselves Kings in His Kingdom; and if not sole Kings, yet Sharers in Christ's Regal Power, Partners of His Legislation and Jurisdiction, Co-assessors on His Throne, and Co-Judges on His Tribunal. These were plainly and unanswerably confuted on Principles not only necessary for the Defence of the Reformation, but of Christianity it self; without which Christianity could never have been Established at first, nor afterwards when Ignorance and Superstition had over-run the Christian World, have been purged from Idolatry and Error.

It might have been reasonably expected that such Signal Services should have met with the good liking and

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and Approbation of the Best part of the Protestant World, the Church of England. But instead of that we have seen this true Defender of the Church treated with Contumely and Reproach, and all manner of Injuries and Indignities, and with great Violence and Passion persecuted for pleading it's Cause, and defending it from the outrageous Attacks of Those Rebel Sons who *are gone out from it*: Calumniated and Reviled by Those, who tho' they still *continue in it*, and would be thought the greatest, the only Church-men, yet seem better pleased with those who *attack it*, than those who *defend it*; and are angry with All who *defend it* better than themselves, tho' when they defend it on other Principles than those they have censured, their Defences are so weak and ridiculous, that one would be tempted to think them corrupted by our Adversaries to betray it.

Of those Churchmen, as they call themselves, who have engaged in this work of Calumny and Defamation rather than Argument, and entered the Lists against the Invincible Champion of Protestantism, Two only are considerable, The Dean of *Chichester*, and the Master of *Eaton*. The first had some Years ago printed a Discourse in which He advanced the same Principles He now condemns, and plainly asserted that *the Church had no Right to impose Penal Laws upon any account; and that in Matters purely of a Religious nature the State had no Right neither*. He now contradicts what He then maintained (which yet He is resolved not to give up, but at the same time to defend contradictory Positions) and declares it to be his present Opinion, *That tho' Temporal Penalties are improper in a Spiritual Kingdom, yet they are proper in a Spiritual Kingdom; and that tho' the State has no Right to impose Penal Laws in Matters purely of a Religious Nature, yet it is Right to impose such Laws*.

His way of maintaining this will Justify me to all the World for applying to Him these Words of Dr. *Weierfels*.

Scopus Ubi in [Scriptore] deficit Recta Intentio, & ne-
 quidem Sæpius sincerus est, quo plus ille scientiæ va-
 let & Ingenio, eo longius a vero aberrabit; eoq; ma-
 gis alios tum sua Authoritate, tum Coloribus, quibus
 Errorum suum incrustabit, ejusdem Erroris contagio
 inquinabit. Where a Writer wants Sincerity and an Honest
 Intent, the more Learning and Wit He has, the further
 He will run himself into Error, and is the more likely by
 his Authority, and the Colours He varnishes his Errors over
 with, to infect others with the same.

The other Anti-Protestant, Dr. Snape, as he is not e-
 qual in Abilities to the first, so neither had He so many
 Difficulties to get over as HE had. He has the good
 Fortune not to have asserted formerly, when views were
 different, the direct contrary to what He now maintains.
 But tho' what He has now wrote does not contradict
 any thing He has formerly wrote, yet He has sufficiently
 contradicted himself in what He has now wrote; and
 more than once plainly confessed the Truth of the
 Principles He writes against.

The weakness of his Cause has led him into such Un-
 justifiable and Unchristian Attempts on the Unex-
 ceptionable Reputation of His Antagonist, and drove
 him on to break thro' all the Rules of Honour and Hos-
 pitality in such an unparalleld manner as all the
 World is ashamed of but Himself. The Sum of what
 He maintains is, That, Men are obliged to submit to the
 Unexamined decisions of the Church for the sake of mere
 Authority? And that the Civil Magistrate has a Right to
 Terrify Men, and keep them in awe in their Religious
 Capacity.

There have not been wanting many true Friends to
 Liberty of Conscience and Unfettered Protestantism,
 who have assisted in confuting what these two Writers
 have advanced in maintenance of their Positions. But
 if none else had opposed them, what the Bishop of
 Bangor alone has wrote in Answer to them would to all
 Persons, who make use of their own Eyes and Reason,
 appear a sufficient Confutation of them. The first of
 them

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them seems very Sensible of this by artfully changing the Scene, and starting two new Controversies to divert the World from attending to the many Misrepresentations, numerous Inconsistencies, artful Sophisms, various and contradictory Windings, His Lordship has plainly proved Him guilty of. The *last*, to shuffle off the Argument, has run into personal Scandal and Defamation in which He has been so shamefully expos'd, that if His Conscience were not scar'd and harden'd, He would ere now have drop'd it, and begged Pardon of God, the Bishop, and the World.

It has been made out beyond Contradiction, that the above-mentioned Positions cannot stand without overthrowing the Foundation of the Reformation: so that nothing more seems to be necessary on that Head.

Yet perhaps the World may not be unwilling to see the truly Christian and comprehensive Principles, that the Bishop of *Bangor* has oppos'd to them, clearly and solidly maintained by a foreign Protestant Divine; and to know how the most Judicious of the Reform'd abroad reply to the Objections against them (the *same* that have been here urged by the Drs. *Sb.* and *Sn.* and others who are Knight Errants enough to fight for such a Romantick Castle in the Air, as a Reformed Church without the Foundation of Liberty of Conscience and Private Judgment) made there by the profess'd Enemies of Protestantism the Papists, whose chief Strength is placed in those Objections, only more consistently urged and insisted on in their full extent.

I cannot but think that whoever reads without prejudice or Party-prepossession these Treatises of *Werenfels*, will agree with me, That all the Objections against Private Judgment, and Arguments for the Magistrate's Authority over Conscience made by the Drs. *Sb.* and *Sn.* are fully answered: and that a Re-union of Protestants on the foot of Private Judgment and Liberty of Conscience is as well a possible as a desirable Blessing

That

That the World therefore may be, if possible, yet further convinc'd that the Bishop of *Bangor's* Principles are the only ones, which can be maintain'd consistently by Protestants; accept, Sir, as an acknowledgement of your kind Present, my Translation of these three Discourses. If it may be of any Service to the World, the Thanks are due to you, which is one Reason among others, why I inscribe it to you. The many private Obligations I have to you, I shall not trouble the World with. But I must not omit taking this opportunity of returning you my Thanks for the Obligation I have to You in common with the Publick for your seasonable Protestation against the Proceedings in Convocation in opposition to the Bishop of *Bangor's* Protestant Doctrines, and the King's Supremacy: which confirm'd me in my Resolution of dedicating this Translation to You. The unbiaſſed Integrity, and Unshaken Firmness, that discover themselves in that Protestation, and the Paper You have publish'd on that occasion, as they will very grievously offend THE MANY; so they will encrease the Esteem which all true Friends of Protestantism, who think Popery in all Dresses (whether bare-faced, as in *Spain* and *Portugal*, or disguis'd under the Name of CHURCH, as among Us) is with the greatest Circumspection to be guarded against, as the most dangerous of Enemies to all the Rights and Liberties of Mankind: Your Protestation, I say, will encrease the Esteem which all such Protestants have for You. The Sincerity and English Plainness, which all who are happy in Your Friendship, experience and love You for, appear in every Page of that Paper.

I hope, Sir, You will not always stand single, when You stand up in the Convocation in Defense of Protestant Doctrines. I doubt not but I shall live to see your Example follow'd by other Members of that House, who are known to have the same Sentiments of that Prosecution with your Self.

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I am desirous to be an Imitator of the Frankness and Plain-dealing which descend to You from the late ever memorable Primate of *Canterbury*, a Lover of Plainness without Ceremony, and Truth without Artifice; and which among many other Virtues makes so commendable a part of your Character. I proceed therefore to speak freely, as I have begun.

I know the Judgment and Arguments of this Author will be of but little weight with most of those who are warm against the Bishop, who do not look on the *foreign Protestants* as Christians, but confine that Name to those of their own narrow Principles and Opinions. The name of *Protestant* is now grown odious to many; and *English Catholick*, a Name hitherto appropriated to *English Papists*, is growing more fashionable, and next to that of *Church-man*, the Badge and Boast of a Party. *Protestant* is a Title they abhor much more than that of *Papists*, and by way of *Reproach* leave it to their Adversaries, who will always glory in being so *Reproach-ed*.

Against these the following Treatises may serve as an Apology. Of bringing them to a Christian Temper there is little Hope; tho' if it were possible, these Discourses, in which that Party-Zeal and Fury for a Cause they are possess'd with, are so well laid open and expos'd, might be as effectual as any thing to that purpose.

But there are others who look on the foreign Protestant Churches, as Parts of the same Catholick Church of Christ with themselves, and love and respect them as Brethren: who yet are unaccountably engaged against the Bishop, and do not seem to be convinc'd that Protestantism is indefensible on any other Foundation than that the Bishop proceeds upon. To these it may be of some Use to be put in Mind that their Brethren abroad, as well as the best Defenders of the Reformation at Home, have always been and are of the same Sentiments; judging that without perfect Liberty of Conscience and the freest use of Private Judgment, our
Seps-

Separation from the Church of Rome cannot be justified.

Of these I would beg with all the Modesty, Humility and Deference that is due to so many great and good and learned Men, seriously to weigh the Arguments of the following Treatises; and as they cannot but see that the Author of them perfectly agrees with the Bishop of Bangor, so I perswade my Self they will not be able to deny their Assent to the clear Evidence of the Truths asserted.

My Translation perhaps may not come up to the Spirit and Elegance of the Originals, but the Arguments are truly represented. I have taken the Liberty in three or four Instances to omit a Sentence without which the Argument was full and complete, especially Quotations from Classick Poets; which tho' in a Latin Discourse they have their Beauty, yet in an English one, if translated, they lose it; if not translated, notwithstanding the Authority of the Dean of Chichester, they are in my Opinion more Pedantick than Elegant.

At the End of the third Chapter of the first Discourse I have omitted two Pages relating to the Evidence of the Scripture's being Authentick; because our Author's Notions are something particular in that Point, and here but briefly expressed; And it will be more Justice to Him, to read them explained at large in some other Treatises of His, particularly that *De triplici teste de Verbo Dei Testante*. I could wish those who read this first Treatise would read along with it The Prefatory, Epistle and Introduction to Bishop Taylor's *Liberty of Prophecy*; and Dr. Claget's Sermon on *John vii. 17.* (tis the last in the II^d Volume :) and Dr. Sherlock's *Preservative against Popery*, Part 1st. and Part 2^d. *Señ. 4.* I have also omitted about 8 Pages Introductory to the Second Discourse, because 'tis sufficiently compleat without them (and I study Brevity;) They do not at all relate to Authority over Conscience, the Subject of the Discourse; but to the occasion of writing the Discourse, and a different Controversy about the Authority of the Magistrate over Men

Men who confessedly *are* contrary to their Consciences. One or two other short occasional Passages that relate only to *this*, and not to the Subject of the Discourse, are also omitted.

Those who have not read Mr. Lock's excellent Letter on *Toleration*, should read that, and if they have leisure, His *Defense* of it, along with this Second Discourse.

The Third Discourse, was wrote with an Eye particularly to the Re-uniting the *Lutherans* and the *Reform'd*, as they are call'd abroad, *i. e.* the *Calvinists*, and therefore throughout that Discourse the Author mentions only them. I have taken the Liberty every where instead of *Both Denominations of Protestants* or *Both Sides* (which are his Words where-ever I have made use of the Words *All Protestants*, *All Sides* or to that purpose) to substitute *All Protestants in general*, because the Arguments are of equal Force with regard to *All*, and by being so applied may the more strongly affect those among Us who shall read them.

By *all Protestants* I mean 'All those who make Reason and the written Word of God contain'd in the Scripture only, the Rule of their Religion: in opposition not only to *Papists*, who make Tradition and Church-Decisions part of that Rule, but to *those* also who make any other Additions, as *Enthusiasts*, and Pretenders to New Light and Inspiration; and *those* who do not take that for a Rule but deny all Revelation, as *those* who call themselves *Deists*, whom all Good Protestants lament to see so numerous.

You, Sir, I am sure will approve of what I have done, and all who are truly concern'd for the healing our Breaches and the Encrease of Christian Unity; who are concerned for the simplicity of the Gospel of Christ, and preserving the Church of Christ on its true Foundation, and building on it only Gold and Silver and precious Stones, for the Libertie of Mankind, for their free use of their Faculties, and leaving them in Religious Matters to God and their Consciences; for the Honour of the Reformation, and the Prosperity of the Church of England.

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As many as are so minded, who have Zeal consistent with Charity, who for the sake of what they think an Article of Faith, do not break what they know to be a Commandment; who are perswaded with Tertullian, that 'tis *Humani Juris & naturalis Potestatis unicuique, quod putaverit colere, sed nequaquam Religionis cogere Religionem quam suscipi debes sponte non vi.* That 'tis the natural Right and Privilege of every Man to Worship God in the Method He thinks most pleasing to him, but by no means a Duty or Act of Religion to force Religion on Men, which ought to be embraced willingly, and not by compulsion; who agree on this Sentiment with the concurrent Opinion of all Antiquity, of Cyprian, Minutius Felix, Lactantius, Hilarius, Salpustius Severus, Chrysostom, Jerom, Austin, Theophylact, Bernard and many more, whose Testimonies may easily be produc'd to those who think them Arguments; As many, in short, as seek after the things that make for Peace, Peace be upon them and the Israel of God. But if the Enemies of Peace talk of Peace, while they make themselves ready for Battle; if they themselves make Peace impossible, yet clamour against their Antagonists for breaking the Peace of the Church; they must be told that such a Peace is not Peace, but Stupidity, the Lethargy of the Church, and a Sleep into Death; they must be answer'd in the Words of the ever-glorious Jewel. *Neque nos Consensu nem & Pacem fugimus: sed Pacis Humana causa cum Deo belligerari volumus.* Dulce quidem, inquit Hilarius, est nomen Pacis, sed aliud est Pax, aliud Servitus. Nam ut (quod isti querunt) Christus tacere jubeatur; ut prodatur Veritas Evangelii; ut Errores nefarii dissimulentur; ut Christianorum Hominum oculis imponatur; ut in Deum aperte conspiretur, non ea Pax est, sed iniquissima Pactio servitutis. Est quaedam, inquit Nazianzenus, Pax inutilis, est quoddam utile dissidium. Nam Paci cum exceptione studendum est quantum fas sit, quantumque liceat. — Hinc, inquit Cyprianus, Schismata oriuntur, quia Caput non queritur, ad Fontem, (Sacrarum Scripturarum) non reditur &

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caelestis Magistri praecepta non servantur. Non enim, inquit, Pax ea est, sed Bellum; nec Ecclesia jungitur qui ab Evangelio separatur: Isti vero cauponari tantum solent nomen Pacis. Pax enim illa, quam tantopere querunt, otiosorum tantum est ventrum Tranquillitas. i.e. Nor do we eschew Peace and Concord; but to have Peace with Man we may not be at War with God. *The Name of Peace is a sweet and pleasant thing*, saith Hilarius: But yet beware, saith He, *Peace is one thing, and Bondage is another*: For if it should so be (as they seek to have it) that Christ should be commanded to keep silence, that the Truth of the Gospel should be betrayed, that horrible Errors should be cloked, that Christian Men's Eyes should be bleared, and that they might be suffered to conspire openly against God; this were not a Peace, but a most ungodly Covenant of Servitude. *There is Peace*, saith Nazianzen, *that is unprofitable*; again, *there is a Discord*, saith He, *that is profitable*. For we must conditionally desire Peace, so far as is lawful before God, and so far as we may conveniently. -- From hence, saith Cyprian, *spring Hereses and Sects, because Men keep not to the Head, and have not their Recourse to the Fountain* (of the Scriptures,) *and keep not the Rules given by the Heavenly Teacher*: For, (saith He,) *that is not Peace but War*, neither is He joyned unto the Church, that is severed from the Gospel: As for these Men, they use to make a Merchandize of the Name of Peace, for that Peace, which they so fain would have, is only a Rest of Idle Bellies.

Thus that great Light of the Reformation. I am glad to see that notwithstanding the Cries of the Peace, or the Danger of the Church, so many Learned and Able Men tread in his Steps, and draw their Pens in Defense of so good a Cause. I have an Ambition to contribute my Mite, and I am confident I shall do more Service by thus setting before the World the Reasonings of so Judicious and Weighty a Writer as *Werenfels*, than in any other Method I could take.

I have a just Concern for the Liberties of Mankind, and the Honour of Religion, and will never be wanting to the utmost of my Power in opposing all Tyrannical Encroachments of either Prince or Priest. *I will give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, but Conscience He has nothing to do with; I will reserve to God that and all other things that are God's. I will give unto the Clergy all that is the Clergy's: I will respect them for their Works sake, and pay all the deference to them they can desire, while they challenge it by their Exemplary Life, and Faithful Discharge of their Office, and not for any unintelligible and impossible Powers of Blessing, Damning, Saving, &c. I will have a great Regard to their Judgments, especially if I see they have any Judgment of their own, and do not blindly give it up to what is already determined to their Hands: But I will never Sacrifice my own Private Judgment to them, nor take their Determinations for Articles of Faith. The utmost I can allow is what Grotius does in these words, 'Ecclesia Patres precipere quaedam possunt non per se necessaria, sed pro ratione temporum locorumve utilia aut ad vitandas mali occasiones, aut ad virtutum adminicula. Annot. in Jerem. Cap. 25.* The Fathers of the Church may enjoyn some things not as of themselves, or absolutely necessary, but as convenient and useful in the present Circumstances for the avoiding Temptations to Evil, and the encouragement and support of Virtue. But even these Injunctions I think ought to be submitted to the private Judgment of the Laity, to Judge for themselves whether they are lawful and may be conscientiously complied with or no. I will never be angry with, nor Calumniate any for differing from me in Opinion; but I will always strenuously oppose all Doctrines that I think disgraceful to Human Nature and Human Understanding, and dishonourable to the Divine Nature and Revelation: All Doctrines that teach Us to mistake the Decisions of Men, for the Laws of God: Subjection to fellow Christians, for Obedience to Christ; Human Systems,

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Stems, for the Gospel; Dictates of mere Authority, for a Rule of Faith; direct Popery, for Protestantism; and a new invented Creature of Imagination, for the true Church of *England*: all Doctrines, which if they were true, neither the Gospel, nor the Reformation, nor the Church of *England*, could ever by Right have had one single Votary in the World.

In thus doing, I know I shall make you the most agreeable Return for the Favours you have plentifully bestowed on,

Honoured Sir,

Your most Obliged,

most Sincere, and

Humble Servant,

It is the common Method of Men in Power, when they have any difference with their Interests to endeavour, first, by Reason to persuade them; and if that does not do, then by Authority to draw them into the Phileleutherus. If by neither of these ways they win or lose Allant, they break on the Duke as beneath Persons of superior distinction. In this manner have we been treated by the Church of Rome, which condescended for some time to Argue with Us, not so successfully as was expected: But now it seems beneath the Dignity of a Roman Church to reason

DISCOURSE I.

DEFENSE

OF

PRIVATE JUDGMENT.

CHAP. I.

The Design of those who deprive Christians of the Right of Judging for themselves in Matters of Religion: And the Design of this Discourse.

IT is the common Method of Men in Power, when they have any difference with their Inferiors, to endeavour, first, by *Reason* to *Perswade* them; and if that does not do, then by *Authority* to *Awe* them into their *Opinions* and *Measures*: If by neither of these ways they *gain* or *force* Assent, they break off the *Dispute* as beneath Persons of Superior distinction.

In this manner have we been treated by the Church of *Rome*, which condescended for some time to *Argue* with Us, not so successfully as was expected: But now it seems beneath the Dignity of *Mother Church* to
reason

A Defense, &c.

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reason any longer with self-conceited Sons that have the Impudence to oppose *Argument* to *Argument*; and *Authority*, *Authority* alone is insisted on, which 'tis hoped will strike us dumb for ever.

If we with modest confidence, represent the danger of submitting our Judgment without Examination to any Human Authority how great soever, especially in Matters relating to Salvation or Damnation; We are bid be of good cheer, for that there is no danger in this method of *Authority* the Church prescribes. *Authority* may indeed mislead us in Philosophy and Human Sciences: There He who searches after Truth must regard *what* is said alone, and not *who* says it; and be determined not by the weight of *Authority*, but of *Argument*. But in Matters of Salvation, another method must be taken: Here that is the safest, nay the only way to lead us to the Truth, which in all other cases is the most likely to lead us from it.

For how desperate would the Salvation of most Christians be, if God had not made this way which is so plain and easy, the safest too? Most Men are incapable of examining into Articles of Faith; so incapable, that they deserve rather to be laught at, than seriously confuted, who set Day-Labourers, Peasants and all the inferior ranks of Men on examining into Articles of Religion, dubiously controverted even among the Learned. These Men are capable only of submitting themselves to such *Authority* as appears to them the greatest: 'Tis necessary therefore there should be somewhere such a Plain and Evident *Authority*, as they may safely have recourse to, and rely upon without any hazard of mistake. If there be no such *Authority* in the World, then God has not made due provision for the Salvation of so many Souls: If there be, beyond all doubt 'tis in the Church of Rome, against which some perhaps may cavil with plausible *Arguments*, but no Body of Men in the World can contend for the preheminance of *Authority*.

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If this common Argument for *Authority*, which is so much the Favourite of *some* Men, appears to be of any weight: I can assign but two *Reasons* for it. *The first* is, That 'tis an Argument very capable of Rhetorical Colours and Flourishes, by which Men of Parts and Eloquence can easily make the absurdest Contradictions appear probable Truths to the unthinking Multitude. *The other* and most considerable is, that those whose Inclination or Interest it thwarts to examine into the Established Religion of their Country, are pleased with nothing so much, as with whatever not only excuses, but represents as commendable that Rule of Action, by which they govern themselves; and are infinitely delighted with hearing it asserted with great assurance, *that* they act the wisest part, who do not give themselves the trouble of a tedious painful Examination, the Result of which too might be dangerous; but in chusing their Religion, suffer themselves to be carried away with the Stream: That this is so far from deserving Censure and Reproach, as proceeding from Sloth and Negligence, or from a Servile and Abject Temper of Mind submitting to the Nods of the Great, or the Opinion of the Many, that it rather deserves the highest Commendation, as proceeding from true Prudence and Christian Humility. When Men are very fond of a Conclusion, 'tis a hard matter to bring them to see any weakness or fallacy in the Arguments used to prove it.

But to make it appear there is more *Show* than *Truth* in this Argument: I intend to prove in this Discourse, That the Generality of Christians are not so incapable of Judging for themselves in Religion, as the Doctors of the Church of Rome, in their Rhetorical Strains would make us Believe: Who for that purpose very artfully magnify on one side the exceeding *Difficulty of Judging*, and on the other the prodigious *Stupidity of the generality* of Christians. That they indulge themselves on each hand in Flights too Hyperbolic, I hope to make appear to any one, who with-
out

out prejudice shall think fit seriously to examine what follows; first in what Points we allow all Christians a Right to Private Judgment, and what sort of Judgment that is; and then what Qualifications we suppose they have, which make them capable of Judging.

CHAPTER II.

In what Points the Generality of Christians need not Judge at all.

IT is not necessary for the Generality of Christians to form any Judgment at all of Men and Churches differing from them; of the hopefulness or hazard of their Condition; the Decrees of God about them; who will be saved, or who will be damned. To have a determinate Opinion in things of this Nature is not necessary to any one's Salvation: And the Judgments Men do make in them, are generally rash, and such as Christ has warned us against in that Prohibition, *Judge not, that ye be not Judged.* Matt. 7. 1. It may perhaps sometimes be necessary for the Pastors of the Church to give their Judgment in such a case for the more effectual reclaiming those who are in Error: But a common Christian, whom God has neither called to nor qualified for that Duty, may without any danger or prejudice to himself or the Church, suspend his Judgment in these Points. Let him keep within himself, mind his own condition and affairs, working out his own Salvation, and believe He is not much concerned to know what is the good pleasure of God concerning those who are without. And since the Judgments passed in these Cases are usually very dismal, let Him know He ought to be so much the more modest and reserved in pronouncing them, the more unqualified He is to do it with certainty, and the more danger

danger there is of his mistaking in it thro' Unskilfulness. *It will be said, that it is not so, but I own it generally falls out quite otherwise. The wisest Men are the most cautious in this Case, and the less discernment and knowledge a Man has, the more ready He usually is in passing the Sentence of Damnation on his Neighbours. There are some who make it the Effence of Godliness to Damn all Dissenters, and would have but little Religion left if there were no Hereticks and Schismatics, on whom to vent that Zeal for God with which they burn. If any one thinks it rather the Effect of a blind Party-Zeal that the Vulgar give their Opinion concerning what they neither do nor can competently understand, I will not dispute it. Thus much is certain, that such Judging is not necessary to Salvation, and is more Dangerous than Useful. Common Christians should rather Judge of Doctrines than of Men: Tho' neither do we require of them to Judge of all Doctrines, that are controverted between Divines of the same or different Communions. I do not deny that the controverting and determining several of those Doctrinal Points by Learned Men has it's use. But this I say, 'tis neither necessary nor at all of use for the generality of Christians to do the same.*

I would to God there were not a great many Controversies among the Learned, which 'tis useless to determine even in their Schools: Nay, not only useless, but often hurtful; rash, and not seldom impious.

2 Tim. ii. 23. Learned Men often are fond of foolish and unlearned Questions, and too much addicted to such Enquiries as minister Questions rather than Godly Edifying, nay even dote about Questions and Strifes of Words, and profane, and vain babblings and oppositions of Science falsely so called: and are so wholly turned aside unto vain jangling, 1 Tim. i. 6. 7. that they themselves understand not what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

We are not therefore to wonder that Divinity is made so difficult a Science, as to be unintelligible to the

the generality of Christians. The Apostles themselves, should they return into the World, would not understand our modern Christianity: in which they would be unable to discover any thing of the venerable simplicity of the Religion they preached. But the Dark-ness, in which the fruitful Imaginations of Men have buried Christianity, is not sure a just Reason, why the greatest part of Christians should be deprived of all Right of Judging in Matters of Faith, and condemned to implicit Obedience and blind Assent. Let Divines enjoy these darling Fancies, the Thistles and Briars in their Schools, which common Christians may safely be ignorant of and despise.

But you will say, tho' these Controversies might have been spared, yet since they are started, and have divided Christians into Sects and Parties, 'tis now become necessary for every common Christian to come to some Resolution concerning them; at least so far as to know to which side to join himself among so many, all pretending to be in the right.

I answer, These Controversies are either concerning Articles necessary to Salvation, or not. If they are, then every one is capable so far of discerning Truth from Falshood, as to determin which Church He ought to join with. Of which more hereafter. If they are not: Then every one who is concerned to secure his own Salvation, is indeed obliged to enquire, as far as He is able, what is most likely to be true in every point of moment in Religion, and to join himself to those among whom He may most freely profess what appears to Him to be true. But if in any of these points, thro' Human Frailty, He falls into an Error, and joins with those who profess the same; that Error is not damnable, nor hinders Him who professes it, from performing rightly all that is necessary to Salvation in Communion with a Church infected with the same. Nor need He fear or be concerned at the Censures of the opposite Party, who damn Him for it to everlasting torments without hope of Pardon. For 'tis
a small thing to be judged of Men or of Man's

1 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

Judgment: It is the Lord who judgeth us, and by his Judgment only we stand or fall.

Nor is it always necessary to come to any Resolution in the controverted points in which Christians are divided, to know which Sect You must forsake and which adhere to. This very thing *'That you cannot come to any Resolution in them,* is sometimes a sufficient Direction to You, what to do in such a Case. Because this may seem a Paradox, I will here apply a Rule laid down by all *Casuits*, tho' not as I know of apply'd by any to this Case.

For me to *Believe* or *Do* a thing, 'tis necessary I should know that what I *Believe* is *True*, and what I *Do* is *Good* and *Lawful*. But for me *not to Believe*, or *not to Do* any thing, 'tis not necessary I should know that what I do *not Believe* is *False*, or what I do *not Do* *Bad* or *Unlawful*: 'Tis enough if I do *not know* whether it is *True* or *False*, *Good* or *Bad*. For *Rom. xiv. 23. whatever is not of Faith*, that is, *'whatever is done, while our Conscience is in doubt or undetermined concerning the Goodness of the Action, is Sin: which is a Rule so agreeable to Right Reason, that it was not unknown to the Heathens, 'One of whose precepts it was, as Lib. 1. De Offic. Cicero tells us, 'not to do any thing of which you doubt whether it be Right or Wrong.*

To apply this Golden Rule. For me to *Believe Transubstantiation*, and *Adore the Host*, and *Anathematize* those who do not, 'tis necessary for me to know that the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation* is *True*, and that to *Adore the Host* and *Anathematize* all who do not, are *Actions Good* and *Lawful*. But for me *not to Believe* and profess *Transubstantiation*, and *not to Adore the Host*, or condemn those who will not, 'tis not necessary I should know the one to be *False*, the other *Bad* and *Unlawful*. For me to *forbear Believing* the one or *Doing* the other, 'tis sufficient that I do *not know*, whether they are *true* or *false*, *good* or *bad*.

Now

Now if any Church exacts of all its Members to *Believe*, *Profess* and *Do* these things, and *Anathematizes* all that do not; while I am thus ignorant, I cannot hold Communion with that Church: I cannot communicate where the *Belief of Transubstantiation* is made necessary, while I am ignorant whether it is *true* or *false*; nor where *Adoring* the Host and *Damning* Recusants is made necessary, while I am uncertain whether the one be not *Idolatry*, the other an *Unwarrantable Censure*. I am therefore obliged to forsake the Communion of the Church on this very account alone, that I am not permitted to suspend my Judgment, where I cannot Judge: nor forbear *Believing* or *Professing* what for ought I know may be *false*, or *Doing* what is perhaps a Crime or Impiety, at least I do not know that it is not.

If this be true, as most true it is: let every unprejudic'd Person judge whether the Cause of the Church of *Rome* is served by thus representing the Generality of Christians as incapable of Judging for themselves in the Points controverted between It and Us. That Representation is designed to bring them over from the way of *Examination* to that of *Authority*: but it is not considered, that there is a *third* way, they are obliged to take: They may *suspend* their *Assent* in Articles, of which they cannot be satisfied whether they are *true* or *false*; and their *Actions* in Points, of which They cannot be satisfied whether they are *good* or *bad*. And if the Church of *Rome* refuses to allow them in this, they may, nay *must* forsake it's Communion, and join with some other Church which does not oblige them to *Sin*, that is, to do any thing without Faith or a Conscientious perswasion of the Lawfulness of doing it: especially when it is owned by themselves, that what the Church requires to be *Believ'd*, if it be an Error, is the most heinous of all Errors; and what it enjoyns to be *done*, if it is *Idolatry*, is the most abominable of all *Idolatry*. This, this way is much the safest for those who are incapable of Judging in Controversial Points, much safer than the way of *Authority*: Concerning which, whether it be a dangerous way

way or no, 'tis (if any thing be so) next to impossible for the Generality of Christians to determine.

But it will be said, nothing can be more dangerous than for Men to suspend their Judgments in Points of so great Moment, as those controverted between Us. I ask, How can it be proved that this is dangerous to them, who are incapable of forming a Judgment concerning those Points?

How may a common Christian be convinc'd, not that the Church of Rome or any other, but that GOD requires of him, and that under the Penalty of Damnation, to Judge of things, of which He had not made him capable of Judging, that is to improve a Talent He never gave him? May not such a Man much more

reasonably believe that God expects the contrary of Him, that He *should not in-*

trude into those things which He hath not seen, nor can see; nor presume to Judge of things above his Capacity; but that He should use the means, fitted for all Mankind in general to preserve them from Mistakes, of suspending his Judgment in things He does not understand; that in the Worship of God, and Matters relating to Salvation, He should do nothing rashly, or without Faith; that He should *believe* nothing, which may be a *damnable Error*, do nothing, which may be a *Mortal Sin*, for ought He knows, or can know.

True, you'll say, if He could not *any way* know, or be satisfied in these things: But this He may be, if not by the way of *Examination*, yet at least by the way of *Authority*.

But this is what they call in the Schools Disputing in a Circle. For 'tis the very Question in Debate, whether *this way of Authority* be safe or no. The Papists prove it is safe, because 'tis necessary to the determining controverted Points to the Vulgar. But it should first be proved that the Vulgar are oblig'd to come to any determinate Resolution at all in Points, which by their own Faculties they cannot determine. Should any one thus argue, 'A Man has not Wings of his own to fly with

with, therefore He must fly with another Creature's Wings, the Answer would be easy, That the Man need not fly at all. So in this case I answer in like manner. A Man need not determine at all such Points as God has not given him a Capacity of Judging of. God does not require it of Him. If Men do, they act the Tyrant. And such Tyranny alone will justify the deserting a Church, with whatever Titles or Terms dignified or distinguished.

'Tis so far therefore from being a just conclusion, that because the Generality of Christians are incapable of Judging for themselves in controverted Points, therefore they must submit their Judgment to the Church of Rome, that the contrary evidently follows. Especially when 'tis the greatest of all Controversies, whether the Church of Rome is Infallible; a Controversy that includes all others, and if I may so say, the Controversy of Controversies. This Infallibility none believe to be in the Church of Rome, but it self. All the World else denies it. This great Controversy therefore between the Church of Rome and all the World besides, every common Christian must necessarily be obliged by his own Faculties to judge of and decide, before He can safely submit his Judgment to the Church of Rome.

To require this of the Generality of Christians, is just as reasonable as to require a Blind-man to go to Rome, there to find a Guide who can certainly direct him the true Road. But if the Blind Man can find his way to Rome, He has no occasion for such a Guide as He goes to find. So if common Christians can decide this so considerable Controversy, they are not so blind as is pretended, nor have such need of a Guide to submit their Judgments to in all other Controversies.

But if they are no more capable of Judging for themselves in *this* than in *others*; how can they with a safe Conscience profess to believe the Infallibility of the Church of Rome? How without the utmost risk of their Salvation can they give a blind Assent, and blind

Obc.

Obedience to it in all things? or how continue in that Communion, which requires such Assent and Obedience of all it's Members?

To this no Answer can be made, but that the Infal-
lible Authority of the Church of Rome is so evident,
that the most stupid, and to all other Objects short-sight-
ed Mortals cannot but see and feel it, and therefore may
assent to, and obey it in all Points.

But what is it that the silly Vulgar can see and feel so
evidently in the Church of Rome? Do they immedi-
ately and intuitively see it's Infallibility? No one is
so mad to say it. Or do they see what this Infallibility
is the necessary Consequence of? But what is that? For we,
in this blinder than the blind Multitude, can discern no-
thing in this Church that necessarily infers it's Infalli-
bility.

We own the Multitude may see and feel many things
in it, which they see no where else. But from what they
see and feel, can it by good and necessary consequence be
demonstrated that the Church of Rome has received from
God, and that for ever, the Priviledge of Infallibility?
If they can see or feel any such thing, they are *quick*
of sight and feeling indeed, and deserve not to be condem-
ned to blind Assent in all other Points. They may
see and feel as well in the rest, unless they are like
Owls, see only in the dark, and are blind in full Sun-
shine.

C H A P. III.

*In what Points the Generality of Christians are ob-
liged to Judge aright.*

ALL Christians are obliged to form a right Judg-
ment in Articles necessary to Salvation, that is,
without knowing which those Acts of Faith and other
Duties

Duties which are required by God, as necessary to Salvation cannot be perform'd.

These are *not many, nor hard to be discovered in Scripture.* For God has chosen rather to provide for the Salvation of the Vulgar, by making the Christian Religion plain and easy and level to their Understandings, than by requiring any thing of them above their Understandings, only that He might afterwards provide a Remedy for their want of Understanding, by setting up an Infallible Chair in the Church, to which all might safely submit. These necessary Doctrines, I say, are *not many*: For the Excellence of Faith does not consist in the *number of* Articles believed, or the Extent of Knowledge; but in the *steadiness and effectual working of* It. Which is plain from the examples of all those whose Faith we find so much commended by Christ and the Apostles. When *Philip* was to baptize the *Ethiopian*, He did not enquire how extensive his Knowledge was, or how *numerous* the Articles of his Faith, but whether He believed *a few* (for *many* He could not be instructed in in so short a time) *with all* Act. viii, 37. *his Heart*: and contented with a very compendious Confession, admitted him to Baptism: which was agreeable doubtless to the practise of the Apostles: for how could so few Act. ii. 41. Preachers have made so many Converts so soon, *in one day three thousand*, if none without a very extensive Knowledge could have been a Christian?

In the next Ages the Simplicity of the Christian Faith is very evident to all who have read the Writings of those Times; and the primitive Creeds sufficiently confirm it. Not to believe abundance of Articles, but *a few firmly*, and with an unshaken Faith, to *Live up to them*, and *Dye for them*, was what at that time made a Christian.

And to what purpose should God require of any one to believe more than He can understand? and to assent to Doctrines which when they are proposed to him, *He bears Words*, (as *Gregory de Valentia* says,) *but has no Ideas*,

such that Doctor esteems the *Words Transubstantiation, Circum/cscribed, Uncircum/cscribed, Formal, Justification, Opus, Operatum, &c.*

Is it so pleasing to God, to believe what one does not know the meaning of? Will such Faith be fruitful in Works, work by Charity, purify the Heart, and conquer the World, sanctify a Man in Life, and support and comfort Him in Death.

Will it be said that it is necessary to *believe* all that the Church believes, tho' not *explicitly*, in which sense the Belief of but few Articles is necessary? If *Implicit* Faith will do: 'tis well. We too have Faith. We *thus* believe all that *Adam* believed in Paradise, all that the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, and Evangelists believed; all that the Primitive Church believed; Nay, We believe all that the Blessed Virgin, that the Angels and Saints in Heaven believe. Whatever these did, or do believe, we are firmly perswaded is true. But will this Faith be of any use to Us, while we know not what they did or do believe? If such Faith is useless, as it certainly is, what good will it do you to believe all that the Church of *Rome* believes, while you know not what that is? The one will promote our Sanctification, and afford us comfort no more than the other. The one will be a Motive to us to glorify God, Love our Neighbours, Practise Temperance, Justice, Piety and Benevolence no more than the other. The one therefore will help forward our Salvation no more than the other. Faith is *dead*, while it is *implicit*; and we believe then only with *saving* Faith, when we believe *explicitly*. And since the Points which the Generality of Christians *can*, or *are obliged* (even by our Adversaries Confession) *thus* to believe, are *few*; they are as *few* in which they are obliged to *judge*.

But they are not only *few* and level to the Understandings of all, at least as far as all are oblig'd to know any thing of them; but they are also *plainly revealed* in Scripture. For this Principle of ours is very agreeable both

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both to the Word of God, and to Right Reason; that God designed that the Scriptures, a Book in which all are concern'd, should be read by all, not only by the Clergy, but also by the Laity, as they are call'd; and that what He requires to be believed, not only by the Clergy but the Laity, He reveal'd in them so as to be intelligible by the one, as well as the other. 'Tis a Principle of which the antient Doctors of the Church never made any doubt. The Saying of *Austin* is well known, 'In those things which are clearly laid down in Scripture is contained whatever is necessary in Faith or Practise'. But this Principle they must disprove, who would force Christians to submit to Authority under pretence that they cannot of themselves discover in Scripture all that is necessary to Salvation.

See the Judgment of Origen, Lib. 7. cont. Celsum.

And how will they disprove it? By a Text of Scripture teaching that many things are to be believed, which are not there so clearly reveal'd, as to be easily taken notice of? No Man ever heard of such a Text. Or will they appeal to Experience, and produce an Article necessary to be believed by all, which yet is not clearly contained in Scripture? Here they will stick. For after they have given themselves a great deal of trouble to prove the Article they produce not to be clearly reveal'd in the Scripture; if this be granted to them; then how will they prove 'tis necessary to Salvation to know it? which will certainly be denied for this very reason, because it is not so reveal'd, and that Saying of *Chrysostom* will be founded in their Ears over and over, Πάντα ἀπαραίτητα ὄντα. Whatever is necessary is plainly contained in Scripture.

Will they press us with an *Argument ad Hominem*, and produce an Article believed both by Us and Them to be Fundamental, which yet is not so plainly contain'd in Scripture as to be discoverable there by an ordinary Capacity? This way too will fail. The Principle by which we judge what Articles are necessary, we shall always depend upon more certainly, than on the Judgment

ment we make by it : and so shall be sooner brought to own we believ'd an Article to be Fundamental without just ground, than to reject the Rule by which we Judge what Articles are so.

Let the Papists then cease to press us with *Authority*, till they have first proved that God obliges the greatest part of Christians to believe what they can no where discover in his Word: Let them prove that God is not satisfied with such Knowledge as every pious and attentive Reader or Hearer of the Scripture, taking in all requisite Assistances, can thence learn; that He is not satisfied with this, tho' a Man lives up to what He knows, and puts in practise what He learns in his Word, by glorifying him in all his Thoughts, and Words and Actions. And if they can prove this, it shall be granted them, either that God designed only to save the Learned; or that the Vulgar have no other way but to submit to those they think best skilled in Religion, just as when they are Sick, they submit to the Authority of their Physician. Dangerous Submission! 'Tis not Health, or a short troublesome Life that is at stake, but Eternal Salvation! How much depends on the right choice of a Guide, when Everlasting Happiness can be hoped for only on having the good Fortune to chuse right, and everlasting Misery certainly follows the Chance of chusing wrong!

Can we believe that God has placed the Generality of Christians, whose Blindness these Doctors so extravagantly magnify, in such a dismal streight, and exposed them to the hazard of chusing a Guide, not less blind than they themselves are, to be led by till both fall into the Ditch? Is it not more likely that a God, whose Goodness is Infinite, and his Mercy over all his Works, should be satisfied with such attainments of Knowledge, as a well-disposed Man by devout and attentive reading and hearing the Word He has given to all, is capable of attaining; and exact nothing further of Him, but that his Life be answerable to his Knowledge?

Can.

Cannot He who enlighteneth every Man that cometh into the World, give such a share of Understanding to his Creatures, for whom He gave his Son to die, and whom He will bless with everlasting Happiness, as to be able to see in his word what 'tis necessary to their Salvation for them to see? Cannot He who made Man's Mouth, so speak himself in a Book designed for the Instruction of the Learned and the Unlearned; at least in points the Knowledge of which is required under so severe a penalty, as to be understood by the Unlearned as well as the Learned? Cannot God so speak, as well as Popes and Councils in their Decrees, and Private Pastors in their Discourses to their Flocks? To understand these it cannot be pretended an Infallible Interpreter is necessary; unless such Interpreters are to be multiplied *ad infinitum*.

Notwithstanding all this; Experience, you will say, teaches us that there are many things in Scripture hard to be understood even by the Learned. 'Tis true; but there are many others too, than which nothing can be plainer; which *Austin* says, *need only to be heard, and not to be expounded*. Many more things may be so expounded, that every Person of the meanest Capacity may be sure the Exposition is just, without an Infallible Interpreter; as well as they may, that the Sense of the Decrees of Popes and Councils is truly explained to them by their Pastors. Let it now be proved that in these *plain* things all that 'tis necessary to Salvation to know is not included. Let it be proved, not that weak fallible Men, fired with Party-Zeal, and as fond Adorers of their own Opinions, as rash and hasty Censurers of other Men's, are not satisfied, but that GOD is not satisfied with the Knowledge of these *plain* things; but shuts Heaven Gates against, and resolves to damn for ever Persons of mean Capacities, however good and pious, for want of believing more.

Nay our Adversaries of the Church of Rome themselves agree to this Principle of ours, and when they think it for their purpose, make use of it against Us, When, for instance, they would prove that these

Words,

Words, *This is my Body*, * are to be taken in a proper Sense, they have never done with repeating eternally, That the Words of a *Sacrament, Testament, Compact, Covenant or Command*, the Words in which a Doctrine or *Article of Faith* is delivered, ought to be plain and clear. Then they are wonderfully pleased with the Words of *Austin*, cited by *Bellarmino*, 'There is nothing in the Scripture relating to Faith or Practise expressed any where obscurely, which is not elsewhere expressed most plainly.' Then, Metaphors and Figures which, say they, serve only to make a Discourse obscure, are no where allowable but in Prophecies, Encomiums and Pathetick Exhortations; in delivering Doctrines which are precisely to be the Rule of Faith and Manners they have no place.' If now whatever relates to Belief and Practise, whatever is to be precisely the Rule of Faith and Manners is delivered in Scripture in Terms proper and plain, nay the plainest possible: Then they egregiously impose upon the World, who require things to be precisely believed and done, which are no where so contained in that Book: They impose grossly on the generality of Christians, who condemn them to blind Assent on this pretence, that they ought precisely to believe what they can neither see by themselves, nor by the help of others in it.

C H A P. IV.

What sort of Judgment it is the Generality of Christians have a Right to.

IT has been made appear that the Articles of which all Christians are obliged to Judge, are neither many, nor so obscurely revealed in the Word of God, as not to be discoverable by an illiterate Man: And therefore that the difficulty of Men's Judging for themselves is too Hyperbolically exaggerated by the Popish Writers. This

* Our Author has wrote a very good Treatise on these Words.

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will be still more plain from considering what sort of Judgment it is, which we affirm all Christians in general have a Right to.

It is such a Judgment, as does not extend it's Obligation beyond the Conscience of him that Judges, to which all it's Authority is confined. We call it by the name of *Judgment of Discretion*. They therefore trifle in the most serious matter who charge us with setting the Judgment of a Peasant above the Judgment of a Council. And it does not become grave Divines

(to use the words of *Melchior Canus*) 'to

'trifle on the ambiguity of Words, for *Loc. Theol. Lib. i. c. 8.*

'by the Word *Judgment* we do not mean

'the Sentence of a Person who is a Superior in the matter of which He Judges, [or to Him of whose Opinion He Judges;] but we mean only 'discerning what is true from what is false, what is of Human from what is of divine Original.

We do not give a Peasant a Right to oblige a Council to submit to his Judgment, as Councils assume to themselves a Right to oblige Him to submit to theirs. A Peasant Judges for himself; and if He mistakes, He mistakes for himself, and at his own peril. Just as in the Church of Rome, every Peasant Judges for himself when He determines the Church to be Infallible: For in this one point at least He must make use of his own Judgment before He submits it to that of others. Now whether a Peasant Judges of the Infallibility or the Doctrines of a Church, 'tis His Judgment, and can oblige none but Himself who makes it.

With me and others the Judgment of a Great Divine will have more weight than that of a Peasant; the Judgment of a Synod than that of one Divine, if there be no other difference. But with any one who Judges, whoever he is, his own Judgment must have the greatest weight. Even when any one follows the Judgment of others, that has just so much weight, as his own private Judgment attributes to it: Nor can any one submit to the Judgment of others, till He has first

first determined in his own Judgment that 'tis fitting and prudent so to do.

Here then is the difference between the common People of our Communion, and those of the Church of *Rome*. Each of them Judge for themselves, and follow their own Judgment. Those of the Church of *Rome* judge it better to submit to the Authority of their Doctors, than examine their Doctrines. Those of our Communion judge that no Human Authority is sufficient to work in us that Faith and Confident Assurance that God requires of Us. In the Church of *Rome* the common People Judge their Teachers cannot Err. In our Church they Judge them to be Fallible as well as other Men, at least dare not pronounce them Infallible; and for this reason they Judge it very dangerous in Matters relating to Salvation or Damnation to depend on their Authority.

But, it may be said, in this very Point your People judge amiss, That they Judge it less dangerous to trust to their own private Judgment, than that of their Teachers; nay of a Council. They Judge arrogantly in thinking themselves wiser than a whole Council.

The Controversy then is reduced to this single point, 'Whether our People Judge amiss and arrogantly or no.

And we deny it to be Arrogance in an Illiterate Man to believe He *thinks more rightly* in one or two points, than many Learned Men. It would indeed be Arrogance, if He should thence infer that he is wiser than all those Learned Men. And this is always the false Reasoning of those who cannot bear any should dissent from them: For this they think none can do without pretending to be more Wise and Judicious than *they* are. Were this true, then Christians could not refuse their Assent to an *Angel*, who should *Gal. 1. preach another Gospel*, without pretending to more Wisdom than the Angels. The *Jews*, that cursed Multitude that knew not the Law (as their Teachers described them) would have been to blame to judge

judge otherwise of Christ than the Learned Men of the Age : Nor must any inferior Christian have dissented from the whole World, when it groaned and wondered to see it self turned *Arian*. It would at this rate have been the greatest Arrogance. Nay, if this be allowed, it would be Arrogance in any one to follow his Private Judgment in believing the Church of Rome to be Infallible in opposition to the contrary Judgment of the greatest part of the World.

I trust my own Judgment more than other Men's for much the same Reason, that I trust my own Eyes more than other Men's, which sure no one will stile Arrogance. I can be conscious to my self, that I am a sincere Lover of Truth, and have, as much as I could, laid aside all Prejudice, prayed earnestly for God's Assistance, and examined with Care and Impartiality, I can be conscious to my self, that my own Opinion appears as clear and evident as 'tis possible for any thing to do ; so that without acting against my Conscience I cannot doubt of it, nor have Power to think otherwise. Of all this I can be certain in my own Case ; but not one of these things can I be certain of in another Person. Why therefore should it be called Pride in me to trust my own Judgment more than other Persons? Every one, says *Lactantius*, especially in things which relate to the general conduct of his Life and Actions must trust to, and depend on his own Sentiments and Judgment.

And why do I make many words? God himself commands us to rely more on our own Judgments, than other Men's, when He commands us to examine our selves into the Truth of what is taught by other Men, and commends those who do so. See 1 *Thess.* v. 21. 1 *John* iv. 1, 2. 1 *Cor.* x. 15. *Matt.* vii. 15, 16. *Act.* xvii. 11. And is it not Impiety to call that Arrogance, which is done in Obedience to God? God is not satisfied with such Faith as is founded only on the Authority of other Men [which is Believing in Men and not in Him,] but 'tis His Will, that those

who are His, should themselves know what they believe, whom they believe, and why they believe.

To believe *blindly*, is neither for the Honour of God, nor of the Church. *Not of God*, because it implies his Revelation to be such that Men of all Capacities cannot of themselves perceive it to be true and from Him. *Not of the Church*, For what can we think of a Body of Men, the greatest part of whom take their Religion upon trust, try nothing, examine nothing, nor ever make any use of their own Judgment? The Judgment of such a Multitude can have but little weight; and it may be truly said that the Papists by forbidding *Examination*, and making *Authority* all in all, entirely destroy the *Authority* of their own Church with all Men of Sense. I represent them to my self under the Idea of a Multitude of Travellers, going as they think to Heaven; of whom perhaps not one knows the way, but every one thinks it cannot be unknown to all the rest that Travel the same Road.

How much better is the way we take, to permit every Man, even the meanest Peasant to Judge: But to Judge *for himself*, remembring at the same time that his Private Judgment is of no Authority but to *Himself*? This will make him the better bear not only with others Dissenting from Him, but with his Peasant Judgment being lightly esteemed and despised on account of his want of Skill and Learning. This is the most becoming *Modesty* in such Men; and for any one to require greater, is to betray his own *Pride*, and render his Cause justly liable to Suspicion.

C H A P. V.

Of the Qualifications requisite for such a Judgment.

TO be able to form such a Judgment (not of *Authority* but *Discretion*) no other qualifications are necessary, but to understand the *Doctrines* proposed to be believed, and the *Grounds* of Believing them.

As to the *First*, We must not only know the *Words*, but the *meaning* of the Words, in which those *Doctrines* are contained.

Else believing them can be no more acceptable to God, than praying in an unknown Tongue. That all Men are qualified to understand the *meaning* of the *Doctrines* to be believed by them is plain; because otherwise 'tis impossible for them to believe them. For to believe, and not know what you believe, or to believe a Proposition, the meaning of which you do not Understand, is a Contradiction.

As to the *other Qualification* of understanding the *Grounds* of Belief: Since the only *Ground* of Faith is a *Doctrine's* being delivered in Scripture, 'tis plain from what has been said above, that all Christians are capable of this also: For nothing can be necessary for any one to believe, which He cannot perceive is revealed in Scripture; and for this purpose no greater strength of Reason is necessary, than for discovering the Infallibility of the Church of Rome.

Besides these *two Qualifications*, no *other* is requisite for Christians to Judge for themselves, in the Sense in which we defend their Right.

It is not necessary they should be able to give a *distinct* account of the Reasons of their Belief; for instance, why this or that *Sense* of a passage of Scripture seems

to be

seems to them to be the true one, or the Scripture it self the Word of God. For tho' all Christians ought to en-

deavour to be able to *answer every one that asketh them a Reason of the Hope that is in them, with Meekness and Fear*; yet it is

not necessary every one should be able to give an exact Philosophical account of the Reasons of his Believing. He Judges for himself and not for others, and therefore 'tis his business to inform and satisfy his own Conscience and not another's. 'Tis enough if He be himself fully convinced, and can sincerely say with the

Apcfile, that *He is himself perswaded and knows whom He has believed*. Nor can it

Rom viii. 32.

2 Tim. i. 12.

be concluded that any one's Faith is Groundless, because He cannot exactly give an account of it. For a Man may see plainly himself the force of a good Argument, and yet not be able to explain it to another; either for want of proper words; or because the Reasons are more easily perceived than expressed in words; or because He sees sufficient Reason to move him to assent, but yet not distinctly, or clearly enough to be able to say what it is that chiefly does so move him. And since it is the steddiness and effectual working of Faith, by which it's Excellency is to be estimated: 'tis this that God has chief regard to in common Christians. Such an exact and distinct knowledge as they are not capable of, He does not require. For which reason the powerful motives of Belief proposed in Scripture, are not proposed with Philosophical exactness, but in a popular way, and such as is most adapted to work upon the common People; from which very thing it appears it was wrote chiefly for their Use.

Nor is it requisite that the Generality of Christians should be able to convince others of the Truth of Christianity. This is the Office of their Ministers, who ought to be *didactici, Apt to teach*: To which 'tis necessary that they should not only propose what is to be believed clearly, but also so to enforce the Motives

of

of Belief, that their Hearers cannot but see their Force. Thus should Teachers do, who would be believed not for their *Authority* but their *Arguments*. But that the *Generality* of Christians should be able to do the like, is not necessary. 'Tis enough for them, since they Judge *for themselves* and not for others, that they be qualified to *understand* the Truth: To be able to teach it too is not necessary. Nay, among Learned Men, how few are there qualified for both, for clearly apprehending the Truth and Force of an Argument, and letting what they thus apprehend in such a convincing manner before others, that they shall not be able to dissent from it. Were any one Man always possessed of *both* these qualities; thus Judicious and thus Eloquent, Great would be the Power of Truth and it would prevail.

Much less is it requisite that the Unlearn'd should be able to answer all Sophisms and Objections. If an Illiterate Man is conscious to himself that such Objections carry not so much conviction, nor affect Him as solid Arguments do; tho' He cannot lay open the Sophism of them, yet He does right not to suffer himself to be shaken in his Faith, or Opinion. To all such subtle Argumentations artfully coloured over, 'tis enough for him to answer, that they no more affect his Mind, than the known Sophism to prove there was no such thing as Motion, did *Diogenes*. Perhaps this Answer will not satisfy others; nor is that necessary for one, who Judges *for himself*, and not for others. He is obliged to satisfy God and his own Conscience, and no one else. To them, and not to other Men, He must give an account of his Judgment.

In the Church of *Rome*, can the Generality answer all the Arguments brought on our Side against submitting to *Authority*, and the Infallibility of that Church? If they can, they are Learned indeed, and deserve better than to be represented by their Teachers as such stupid and injudicious Animals. If they cannot, then it must be owned, that to Judge of a Doctrine, 'tis not necessary

started ry to be able to Answer all Objections. Philosophers themselves direct Us to adhere to Truth once evidently apprehended, tho' we cannot remove all the Difficulties that may be stated against it, with which an ordinary Person will be so much the less affected, the less ambitious He is of the glory of untying every Knot the wit of Man can tie; And will never be in danger of the Fate of *Diodorus Cronus*, who died for grief that He could not answer a Sophism. 'Tis a sufficient excuse in an Unlearned Man for not attempting or being able to do this, that He is Unlearned.

C H A P. VI.

Of the Means, by which these Qualifications are attained and improved.

IN affirming that Common Christians are capable of Judging of the necessary Articles of Faith, I would not be understood to mean that they are born qualified, and have no need of taking pains, or using proper *Means* to acquire and improve the Qualifications requisite for that End. This certainly is necessary: but then these *Means* are as compatible to the Unlearned as the Learned, to the Laity as the Clergy. They are these Three: 1. Reading the Word of God. 2. Instruction. 3. Praying for God's Assisting Grace.

1. Reading the Scripture, which alone must be to us the Word of God, till the Papists can shew us that something else has been as unquestionably transmitted from the Prophets, or Christ and his Apostles to Us. Hearing it read is the same as Reading in those who have neglected to learn to read. This Reading or

Hearing is necessary to Faith, which
 Rom. x. 17. cometh by Hearing, and Hearing by the
 Heb. v. 14. Word of God. Hereby Men's Senses are
 exercise d

exercised to discern Both Good and Evil. This renders the Man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works. It maketh wise the simple. And is able to make even Children wise unto Salvation: For which reason Timothy is commended for having read the Holy Scriptures with care from a Child.

2 Tim. iii. 17.

Pf. xix. 8.

2 Tim. iii. 15.

Nor let any one say 'tis dangerous for common People to read a Book which was most of it wrote by Persons of vulgar Condition, and chiefly for the use of such: And of which Origen rightly says, 'That in it God * condescends to the plain Capacities of the Multitude of Hearers.' There is no danger, but certain profit, if they read it duly: This an Unlearn'd Person does, when He chiefly employs himself in reading those parts of Scripture, in which God condescends to the Capacities of the Unlearned, for this very reason doubtless that they might be read by such: when contented with ordinary Knowledge, He does not affect to be wise above what such Persons should be wise in, nor aim at understanding those things which are above his Understandings: when He reads the Scripture not for the Schools to make himself Learned, but for a Rule of Life to make himself Good: when in reading the Scripture He imitates not a curious Astronomer, but a Sailor, who views the Heavens and the Constellations, not to find there new Appearances and new Stars never before discovered, but to direct Him in his Voyage to the Haven he would be at.

Rom. xii. 3.

There is no danger to such a Person in reading this Book, if in it He seeks above all things the one thing needful, to know God and his Saviour, Jesus Christ and Him Crucified; sufficiently, not to manage Disputations,

Luk. x. 42.

1 Cor. ii. 2.

* συγκαταβαίνει τῇ ἰστορίᾳ τοῦ πλῆθους τῶ ἀνερωμένων. Lib. 7. contra Celsum.

but

but to Love him above all things, and put his Trust in Him alone : If after He has found God and his Saviour, without presuming to understand things hard to be understood, and untie every Knot, He searches for nothing further, but to Know the *Will* of his Lord, and to learn from the Prophets, Evangelists and Apostles what He must *do* to be saved.

There is no danger to Him in reading the Scripture, if He does it with a pious Disposition, religious Trembling, and that *Fear of God, which is the beginning of all Wisdom*; (for with them that thus fear Him is the Secret of the Lord, and He will shew them his Covenant) if He search this Divine Book with Sobriety, Modesty and Humility, which are necessary to all, but especially unlearn'd Readers.

By *Modesty and Humility*, I mean the Virtue opposite to *conceited* and *rash* determining the Sense of obscure places, than which there is no greater Evil in the Church, especially if it once infects the common People : An Evil from which many foolish Misconceits and Imaginations of doting Brains have their original ; nay, which gives rise to almost all the differences among Christians. 'Tis wonderful that so many unhappy Mistakes of the most Learned Men have not taught us more Modesty, and made us more cautious ; that we are not afraid how we tread in the Footsteps of so many, who have miscarried ; and that scarce ever even in the most difficult Points of all, we can be brought to an Ingenuous Confession of our Ignorance : but with insufferable Pride (tho' our Understanding is so limited and confined) rather venture to make God speak any thing in the Scripture, than say once our selves, ' I do not understand this. I cannot determine the meaning.'

No Prince, nay, no private Person would bear with such rash Interpretation of their Laws or Writings. And shall God bear with our fathering on his Word all our own Prejudices, all the Traditions of our Teachers, and Inventions of Human Wit, all the Systems of our own framing

framing, all our darling Imaginations, all the productions of our Passions and Frailties, and the Issue of our Love; our Hatred, our Pride, our Anger, and our Malice? with our worshipping all these Idols of our own Minds, as undoubted Revelations from Him, and imposing them on others to be worshipped as such, and letting loose all our Revenge on those who do not without Admiration and Astonishment consent, *'Tis the Voice of God and not of Man?* Act. xii. 22. *cry out*

'Tis better, we grant, 'tis better the Scripture should not be read at all, than be profaned by being read at this rate. How much soever whimsical Men may please themselves with this way of Interpretation, they will deservedly be laughed at by all Men of Sense, and the All-wise Author of the Scriptures, *He that sitteth in the Heavens* (to use the Psalmist's words) *shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in Derision.* God will not patiently suffer himself and his Word to be treated with such Indignity. How much He is displeased with it, He often shews in the Event, when He gives up those, who indulge their Fancy too much in Interpreting the Scriptures, to all the Delusions of a raving Imagination, which carries them into infinite Follies and Absurdities without Bound and without End. *Ps. ii. 4. raving*

Let pious Pastors, notwithstanding such gross Abuses, go on to recommend to their Flocks the reading and searching the Word of God, and to do their utmost that the *Word of Christ may dwell in them richly in all wisdom.* But at the same time let them in the most pathetick and moving Words caution them to read it with all Reverence, and avoid, as they would the Plague, all *wresting the Scripture, All Visions of their own Hearts,* and rash Interpretations. And then, by the Blessing of God, our Adversaries will be forc'd to forbear representing the promiscuous reading of the Word of God, as dangerous, and breeding only Schisms, and Nests of Fanaticks and Enthusiasts. *Col. iii. 16. 2 Pet. iii. 16: Jer. xxiii. 16. F*

thusiasts. This is not, O good God, this is not the effect of the Incorruptible Seed of thy Word being sown amongst the People; but of the Enemy's sowing Tares among the Seed, while we (O Father forgive Us) were asleep, and neglected to guard the Hearts of thy Flock, and by our Charitable Admonitions, and, what would be more effectual, by our Example to shew them with what Caution and Modesty thy Word is to be handled.

Another Means of attaining the Qualifications requisite for Judging in Matters of Faith, is the faithful *Instruction* of Pastors and Teachers, whom Christ has for this purpose given to the Church. For in reading the Scripture, not only the Unlearn'd but the Learned too are often at a stand: as the *Ethiopian* reading *Isaiab*, who being asked if He understood what He read, *Act. viii. 31.* answer'd, *How can I, except some Man should guide me?* They who neglect and haughtily despise all *Instruction*, are for the most part shamefully led astray by their own Self-conceit; and are generally Men ambitious of the Glory of making Discoveries, and not Lovers of Truth.

But tho' the Unlearned want an *Instructor*, yet they want not a *Judge*, who must be submitted to as Deciding right, tho' He determines falsely. For we neither *may* nor *can* submit to another in *believing* his Decisions, tho' we think them wrong; as we often *may* and *can* and *must* submit to a Judge's Decrees, tho' we think them unjust. They do not want a Rigid Task-master to impose upon them a certain number of Articles of Faith under the severest Penalty, which when He pleases He may double, as *Pharaob* did the *Israelites* that of Bricks. They want not such a Master, as will oblige them to swear to whatever He Teaches them, without giving any other Reason for what He Teaches, but that a *Learner must believe*. They want not such a Teacher as will command them to *bold fast* all his Doctrines without *Trial* or *Examination*; but such an one as will bid them Judge for themselves of what He teaches, *Try all things, and bold fast only that which*

is good. Such an one, as a Student in Geometry wants, not on whose *Authority* He must rely, but whose *Assistance* and *Direction* He is to use in comprehending the Truth of Demonstrations; such an one as whenever He proposes any thing to them, will use the Words of Cyril of Jerusalem, 'Do not believe what I teach you barely for my saying it, unless you see it proved by Holy Writ.'

A *Third Means* of attaining and improving the Qualifications for Judging in Matters of Faith, is a constant and fervent imploring and *and praying for the assisting Grace of God*; without which we *Hear* in vain, and are *instructed* in vain. Without being enlightened of God, and guided by the Holy Ghost, we can neither see the wonderful Things of his Law, nor believe aright the Fundamental Doctrines of the Gospel, nor even say that *Jesus is the Lord*; which holds true not only in Articles of Faith, but of Practice too: for to our *proving what is that good and acceptable, and perfect Will of God*, 'tis necessary that we be *transformed by the renewing of our Minds*. In a Word: of the things of the Spirit of God, no one can Judge, unless He himself is *Spiritual*, and He that is so, judgeth all things. Of God therefore and his Spirit, this Capacity of Judging must again and again be sought.

But as this is no less necessary for the Learned, than the Unlearned, so it is no less attainable by the Unlearned than the Learned. 'Whosoever, *saith St. James, lacketh Wisdom, let him ask it of God*, Here is a Path chalked out for all to arrive at Wisdom; and to shew that no ones Prayers shall be in vain, it followeth 'Who giveth liberally to All (that duly ask.)'

Hence it appears that a common Christian cannot be said to be incapable of Judging in Matters of Faith, unless it be said that no such Person can have the Spirit of God, or be a *Spiritual Man*; that (as the Jews Pro-

1 Cor. xii. 3.

Ro. xii. 2.

1 Cor. ii. 13.
14.

Jam. i. 5.
comp. Luk. xi.
13.

verbially say of a *Poor Man*,) the *Spirit of God* rests upon none of the common People; and that none of them can pray to God acceptably. I on the contrary am of Opinion, that common People do oftentimes pray to God for Wisdom the most earnestly, because they are the most sensible they want it; while perhaps it may be said of the Learned 'These *might* have attained saving Wisdom, had they not believed they had or might attain it of themselves without the assistance of the Grace of God.

C H A P. VII.

Which of the common People are capable, and which not capable, of Judging for themselves.

AND now what do the Papists aim at, when they deny the common People are capable of Judging in matters of Faith? Do they mean, that those of them only are incapable, who neglect to use the means, which are in their Power? Or that they also are so, who industriously use them? If the first, I dispute not with them. I know with grief, that for this very reason there are in their Church such multitudes utterly unqualified to Judge of Spiritual things. I know with grief, that there are few, who are sufficiently concerned for *their own* Salvation; few who are sincerely careful to promote the Salvation of *others*, whose Souls are committed to their Care. I know with grief, that the word of God is but little loved, read or considered; that few read it with design of becoming wise thereby unto Salvation; or bring with them such pious Dispositions, Modesty, Humility, Easiness of Mind, Docility and Application, as they ought. I know with grief, that in many places the Instruction of Christians is

quite

quite disregarded: Proposing a certain number of Articles to be believed or rather remembred and repeated, is all the Instruction thought needful for Youth; demonstrating and enforcing the chief Heads of Religion to their Consciences is never thought of. And no wonder that those who are thus instructed have no other Foundation or *Ground of Belief*, but the *Authority* of their Teachers. I know with grief that there are few who sincerely and conscientiously pray to God to give them *the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the Knowledge of Him, and enlighten the Eyes of their Understandings*, and qualify them to Judge rightly of what is their greatest concern: Or who heartily pray that they may truly place their delight in the Scriptures, and neither be deceived themselves, or deceive others out of them. And lastly, I see with grief, how few there are who seriously consider of how great moment this Duty is to their Eternal Happiness; and how much they continually stand in need of the Divine assistance to perform it.

Eph. i. 17, 18.

But can we think that God has placed an Infallible Church on high, as a City on a Hill, and cloathed it with more than ordinary splendor and unusual Brightness; only that the Idle and Negligent might have a Remedy for their Sloth and Carelessness? That they who are voluntarily blind and by choice remain so, might have a Guide from Heaven to lead them without their heeding, nay carry them thither asleep by the unerring and easy way of Authority? Shall God be called hard, or be said not to have made sufficient provision for the Happiness of Mankind; because He has not provided for the Salvation of those, who judge themselves unworthy of Salvation? With the same, nay with more reason, might we charge a King with Cruelty, who did not build an Hospital to maintain at the publick Charge all that were too lazy to Work, or had run out their Estates by Drunkenness, Gluttony and Gaming.

Should

Should *Abraham* be asked to send one from Heaven to put such Men in mind of their Duty, *Luk. xvi. 29.* He would answer, '*They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them.* May not God in the same manner answer the *Romish* Doctors, who, as if they were *his* Counsellors, endeavour by many Arguments to perswade Him to erect an Infallible Church for the sake of the many who are too lazy to work out their own Salvation, '*They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them, I have written to them the wonderful things of my Law,* and added the Gospel much clearer than the Law, and all these *Hosea viii. 12.* are counted as a strange thing? Let them look to it therefore, lest by easing the greatest part of Christians of all the trouble of examining, they make the way to Heaven too plain and easy. Such easiness calls the Truth of the way in Question. If Broad is the way of Authority, *Matt. vii. 13.* and many there are that walk in it, such is the way that leadeth to Destruction: If narrow is the way of Examination, and few there are that find it, such is the way, that leadeth to Life.

Perhaps it will be said 'tis not in the power of the common People to use the means above described: That their whole Life is spent in continual drudgery and hard Labour, in providing the necessaries of Life, Food and Raiment, so that they have no time to spare to qualify themselves for Judging in matters of Faith.

But who has condemned these Men to such a kind of Life as deprives them of all leisure and opportunity to make sure their Eternal Happiness? St. Paul

Col. iii. 1, 2. has not, who commands all to '*seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right Hand of God: to set their Affections on things above, and not on things of the Earth.*' Nor Christ,

who commands all Men, Postponing the Superfluous care of Earthly Things, to '*seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and trust in God that all other things shall be added*'

Private Judgment.

47

added unto them: And prefers Mary's choosing the better part to Martha's being careful about many things: And recommends to all Men the Care of their Souls in these words, 'For what is a Man profited if He shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? or what shall a Man give in exchange for his Soul?'

Luk. x. 41, 42.

Matt. xvi. 26.

Has God deprived the common People of time enough to work out their Salvation, who has assigned one Day in every Week (to which it seems the Church of Rome without Injury to these Men can add I know not how many Festivals) to be employed solely in this business? He has besides so formed Man as to be incapable of Labour in his Childhood, that Parents, and Teachers, and Masters might have time enough to Educate them from their Infancy in the Belief of Christianity, and frame their Minds, yet pliable and tender, to Piety, and true Holiness. The same may be generally said of Old Age, and all those Seasons in which Sickness and Infirmities make Men unable to follow their Employments. What if they made a due use of all these times? What if Men, while they were at work, which employs their Bodies more than their Minds, should lift up their Hearts to God and Heavenly things? What if the time spent in following Pleasures, or in perfect Indolence, without either labour of Body or thought of Mind; the time others waste in Feasting or in Gaming, I add the time spent by Learned Men in useless Studies, were employed in Divine Meditations and Care of the Soul? 'Tis unjust for Men to complain of want of time, who can spare so much to superfluous trifling and often wicked Actions.

Will then the Papists at last so far undervalue the common sort of Christians, as to deny that by hearing and reading the Bible, by the careful Instruction of their Teachers, and their constant Prayers to God, they can so far qualify themselves to judge of a few clearly revealed Doctrines, as to make their Consciences easy, and secure them at least from damnable mistakes? If they

they thus think, they plainly deny all the Efficacy of the *Scripture*, the *Ministry* and *Prayer*, nay of the *Grace of God*: And must have a prodigious Opinion of the *Stupidity* of these Christians, and hardly allow them to be Men. I cannot help exclaiming with the Comedian †; 'How much does one Man exceed another, what a vast difference is there between a Wise Man and a Fool! The Clergy it seems cannot err in any thing: The Laity can judge right in nothing. 'Tis well these same Laity do not reflect how little they can depend on their own private Judgment, when by it they so confidently decide against the Judgment of all the rest of the World, that the Church they are in is Infallible. Else all the Faith of the Laity would soon be at an End.

But God does not speak so despicably of the common sort of People in his Word. According to that, if they

Eph. v. 8.

10. w. iii. e. 1.

waitol m. 3. d.

1 Cor. x. 15.

1 Cor. 15.

John x. 4. 5.

1 John ii. 20.

Isai. liv. 13.

John vi. 45.

1 Pet. ii. 9.

Joel. ii. 18.

As. ii. 17.

were sometimes darkness, yet now are they Light in the Lord, and therefore walking as Children of the Light, prove what is acceptable unto the Lord. They have understanding and can judge for themselves. They are Spiritual and Judge all things. They are Christ's Sheep and know his voice, and fly away from Strangers, whose voice they know not. They have an *Unction* from the Holy one, and know all things. They are taught of God, and are (no less than the Clergy) a Chosen Generation, a Royal Priesthood, a Holy Nation, a peculiar people. They are as so many Prophets, and as understanding in the things of God, as if their Old and their Young Men, their Sons and their Daughters had all seen Visions and dreamt dreams.

† *Homo homini quid prestat? Stulto intelligens quid interest? Ter.*

How

Private Judgment.

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How long have they been thus incapable? They were not always so: At least when Christ came in the Flesh, and they alone judged aright, they alone received Him: When ‘not many wise Men
 ‘after the Flesh, not many mighty, not many
 ‘noble, were chose; but God chose the foolish
 ‘Things of the World to confound the wise,
 ‘and the weak Things of the World to confound the mighty,
 ‘and the base Things of the World, and the Things that
 ‘are despised, yea and the Things that are not, to bring to
 ‘nought the Things that are. When Christ thus bespoke
 his Father, ‘I thank thee, O Father, Lord
 ‘of Heaven and Earth, because thou hast bid
 ‘these Things from the Wise and Prudent,
 ‘and hast revealed them unto Babes: When
 the Pharisees said, ‘Have any of the Rulers
 ‘or the Pharisees believed on Him? but this
 ‘People which knoweth not the Law are
 ‘cursed.’ I wonder the Romish Doctors do not take
 notice, that they now pronounce of the common Peo-
 ple just as the Pharisees did of old, and make use of the
 same Arguments, to perswade them to the same Me-
 thod of chusing their Religion, as they then did; of
 believing just as their Rulers and Teachers do, and sub-
 mitting their Judgment to Authority.

C H A P · VIII.

*The common Objection against Private Judgment,
 that it introduces as many Religions as there are
 Men, Answered.*

SOME perhaps in the Church of Rome, will be dri-
 ven to own, that ’tis possible some of the common
 sort of Christians may Judge aright in matters of Faith;
 but that in the present State of Mankind, it can be
 G expect-

expected that but few *will*; but may reasonably be feared that from allowing such private Judgment, the utmost Confusion will arise, and as many Religions start up, as there are Persons that Judge. This is a Topick, in which our Adversaries very freely display Their utmost Wit and Eloquence, and found all their Triumphs on.

When I hear them reasoning in this manner, I imagine I am hearing a Senate deliberate, concerning settling the Common-wealth, and guarding it with good Laws to secure it's Peace at Home, and prevent all Dangers from Abroad. For as those Counsellors insist on the more than ordinarily strict observance of certain Laws and Customs, because it is most *for the Interest* of the Common-wealth: So these Men insist on the Belief of certain Doctrines in the Church for the same reason; because they think it highly *for its Interest* that they should be believed. 'The Church, say they, is Infallible, and a blind assent is to be paid to it in all Things.' And for what reason? 'Because 'tis much for the Interest of the Church that this should be true and be believed; and very conducive to keep up the Good Order, and Peace and Tranquillity of it.' However valid *this* way of Reasoning may be thought in Divinity; I mean, from the *Usefulness* of a Doctrine, or the Service it might be of to its *Truth*; I am sure it would not be allowed of in Physick or Philosophy. And I am mistaken if this way of Reasoning does not favour their Opinion, who think Religion nothing but a Politick Tool to awe Men to Obedience.

But to come nearer to the Point. They who are apprehensive that the Use of Private Judgment would Introduce as many Religions as there are Men, seem to me to have but a very mean Opinion of the Catholick Faith. For if such Differences are thought the natural consequence of Private Judgment in Religion, then the present Consent in Religion proceeds only from the Restraint of this Liberty, and no one's being allowed

allowed to examin and judge for himself. Such a Religion can be no otherwise commended than a *Face* which appears *Beautiful*, only because none are allowed to come near enough to examin whether it is *painted*; or *Gold* which only appears to be *Fine*, because no one is allowed to examin it by the *Touch-stone*; or a *Saleable Commodity*, which great multitudes flock together to buy, because 'tis sold in the *Dark*, and none allowed to examin it in the *Light*. It has always been my Opinion, that the Force of Truth was the Reason why the Christian Religion was received with so great Consent and Unanimity; and it therein excelled Mahometanism, which has so many Votaries, only because no one dares freely examin it: But now it seems the Reason why so many embrace the Gospel and the Christian Religion; is no better than the reason why so many on the other hand embrace the Alcoran and the Mahometan Religion.

'Tis well the Honour of Christianity can be better vindicated than by such Principles. 'Tis best vindicated by the Millions of its Votaries, who not only are allowed but commanded to examin their Religion, and yet continue Christians, for the most part, without at all differing about the Fundamental Articles of their Faith; which is allowed by all, who impartially consider and fairly balance the Controversies among them.

'Tis a great Evil I own, if Men of the same Religion for some small Differences about Words or Trifles, or Things at most not Fundamental, treat one another as Men of different Religions, and as Infidels. But they do not for that cease to be of each side Believers in the sight of God, Partakers of the same Religion, and Members of the same Church and Body of which Christ is Head. Tho' they out of weakness of Judgment, or Zeal without Knowledge, Judge every petty Difference to be of such Importance, as of one Religion to make two, God Judges otherwise. Tho'

A Defense of

1 Cor. iii.

4.

22.

One says, 'I am of Paul, another, I am of Cephas, another, I am of Apollos; yet God makes no difference between them, but owns all for His, and whether Paul, or Cephas, or Apollos, or the World, or Life or Death, or Things present, or Things future; all, says He, are yours. And You, who call your selves some of Paul, some of Cephas, some of Apollos, are all Christs, and Christ is God's.

Nor needs there an Infallible Judge to compose these Differences, which are not of such moment as to require to be decided by a perpetual Miracle. There needs only Brotherly Admonition, that those who are Brethren, would cease to look on each other as Enemies: That if in some Things They cannot agree, They would consider of how much more importance those Things are in which by the Grace of God They do agree: and that They would in the fear of God bethink themselves how happy the State of Christ's Church would be, if all of all sides did heartily believe, as much as They agree in, and strive with all Their Might to Live conformably to their Faith.

The Zeal of Pious Princes is wanting to take away this Reproach from Israel, and restrain Christians from carrying to such Lengths, and prosecuting with such Bitterness their Differences in matters confessed by all not to be Fundamental; especially while the very Foundations are with the more Success undermining by a common Enemy: And to use rigor, if it be necessary, not with those, who, would they never so fain, yet cannot agree with Their Brethren in all Points; but with those, who, tho' They can and ought, yet out of Pride will not bear with these unavoidable Differences of Their Brethren from Them: Who are perpetually magnifying the slightest Difference, setting the Members of Christ at enmity, irritating Them against one another, and strengthening by their unreasonable Clamours and Outcries, the Argument of our Adversaries against Private Judgment, from I know not what wide

wide Differences and capital Discords it occasions amongst Protestants.

By this Means the Papists would be precluding from objecting to us any ill consequences of Private Judgment, and any *differences* it necessarily introduces: who perhaps are not in reality so much afraid of these *differences*, as of the *Consent* of all in declaring against their Errors and Superstitions. In this they have experienced an Admirable Harmony and *Agreement*, and still do so, in all who impartially Examine into their Religion, and being tired of blind assent, make use of their own Judgments. But granting that it may be feared the Wickedness of Man will abuse this Private Judgment: What is the Consequence? Is it that 'tis the *Will of God* to remedy this Evil by making the Church Infallible, and obliging all to blind Obedience to it? Or 'that the Church ought to remedy this Evil *by pretending to Infallibility*, and on that pretence, compelling all implicitly to assent to it's Determinations?

For the *First*: When the *Will of God* and His Decrees are enquired into, the *Word of God* must be our only Rule, from which only it can be known how He has Decreed to Govern his Church, and provide for it's Se-

curity. For 'God's Thoughts are not our Thoughts, nor are our ways his ways. *Isai. lv. 8. 9.*

'As the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are God's ways higher than our ways, and God's Thoughts than our Thoughts.' A Cobler or a Taylor is laught at, who in his Shop lays down Rules for State Policy, and directs the Councils of Princes: and do not we much more deserve to be laught at, when we pretend to determine concerning God's free Councils and Decrees, without warrant from his Word? Nor is there any Probability in their Conjectures at God's Will concerning the Method of Governing his Church: which depend on precarious and false Suppositions; As that God decrees not only to remedy all the Evils the wickedness of Men brings into the Church, but also to remedy them by a Miracle: that He forbids the *Use* of whatever many may probably

bly *abuse*. The weakness of these Suppositions is self-apparent. And if so: Then how does it follow, that because many may and do *abuse* Private Judgment; therefore God forbids the *Use* of it? or that because many ill consequences follow from such wicked abuses of bad Men; therefore God has decreed to remedy them by a perpetual Miracle, by making some Men Infallible to the End of the World?

There is no greater Evil in the Church than the prodigious Corruption of Manners that every where prevails. And tho' all thinking Men will allow this to be a greater Evil, than differences of Judgments and Opinions; yet God does not think fit to work a Miracle to remedy it. Why He suffers so many Evils in the Church, we know not: this we know, that He can bring Light out of Darkness, Good out of Evil. As for Heresies and Differences in Religion, He is so far from rooting them out by a perpetual Miracle; that he has ex-

1 Cor. xi. 19.
comp. the Pa-
rable of the
Tares.

pressly declared he will not have them root-
ed out by the Mouth of his Apostle. *There
must be Heresies among You, says He, that
they which are approved may be made mani-
fest among You.*

Nor would such a Miracle as the making some Men Infallible, be a *sufficient* remedy for these Differences. There were Strifes and Divisions in the times of the Apostles who *really* were Infallible; And the Church of Rome's *pretending* to it, has not been able to hinder vast Numbers from forsaking its Communion for these two Hundred Years: Nor can it prevent there being differences among those of it's own Communion, which if they break not out into an open Rupture, 'tis not owing to the Belief of the Church's Infallibility, but the Power of Princes who restrain it.

Such restraining Power Protestant Princes too may exercise: For tho' they have no Authority over Conscience, yet they have Authority to punish those who turn Liberty of Conscience into Licentiousness. They have Authority to restrain the rash Determinations of

one

one Sect of Christians against another, their partial Censures of their Brethren, their scandalous Quarrels about things of no Importance, their mutual Anathematisms, Calumnies, Slanders, Evil-speaking and Wantonness of Tongue. They have Authority, not only over the Laity, but also over Ecclesiasticks as they are called, and a Right to Judge of their Differences, and the considerableness of them. And they often are more likely to judge impartially, and fairly than Divines themselves; who hang Salvation on Scholastick Niceties and Trifles; especially when they are warmed with Disputation, and fretted by Opposition. They have, Lastly, Authority to protect Liberty of Conscience against the Tyranny of the Clergy, whenever they usurp a Dominion over the Faith and Consciences of the Laity: an Authority, which the Church of Rome deprives them of, and leaves them nothing but the Honour of lending their Arm and Power to execute the Decrees of the Clergy.

If it can be proved by no proper Evidence, nor even probable Argument, that 'tis the *Will of God*, that to prevent Differences in the Church, certain Men in it should be Infallible: Will it be maintained that to prevent this Evil, the Church ought to pretend to *Infallibility*, and under that pretence exact of all implicit Obedience.

The Papists themselves, I hope will allow this Remedy to be worse than the Disease: a Remedy, which who can think of without Horror? As God wants not the *Unjust Force* of Men; so neither does He want their Cunning, or their Policy, much less their Fraudulent Tricks and Lies, to preserve the Unity of his Church, as far as 'tis his Will it should be preserved. What can be thought of more perilous, than this daring Remedy? more perilous to those to pretend to *Infallibility*, and so put it out of their Power ever to own, much less correct any one false Step or Error, tho' never so damnable; For what can more tend to make the greatest and most dangerous Errors Eternal and Incurable,

than

than for Men subject to Ten Thousand Errors, to lay down an unalterable Rule never to own one Error, and for fear of losing their Title to Infallibility, to bind themselves by an Oath to defend for ever, right or wrong, what they have once determined and resolved on? Or what can be thought of more Perilous than to pay a blind Obedience, and give an implicit Assent, especially in Matters of Conscience and Salvation, to Men thus boldly assuming Infallibility; to pay such regard to them, as if they were Gods, that neither could deceive, nor be deceived?

Will it, last of all be said, that tho' the Doctors of the Church are not absolutely Infallible, nor the common People absolutely incapable of Judging for themselves in Matters of Religion; yet that a great number of Learned Men, especially assembled in a Council, are much more capable than the Unlearned Multitude; and that therefore 'tis much safer for them without Examination to rely on the Knowledge of Men much more Learned than themselves?

How very hazardous this way is, I shall shew in the next Chapter.

C H A P. IX.

Of the Danger of Relying on the Knowledge of others in Matters of Salvation.

IF God declares Him accursed that too much trusteth to *Man's Power*, or, as Jer. xvii. 5. the Prophet says, *trusteth in Man, and maketh Flesh his Arm*, certainly He is not less an Abomination to the Lord, who too much trusteth to *Man's Knowledge*. The Crimes are both of the same Kind. Both are *trusting in Men*. And, good God! how great is this Trust, when with our Eyes shut we submit our selves to the

the Judgment of others, even in Matters relating to the Eternal Happiness or Misery of our Souls? I do not see but this is a much greater Sin than in Sickness to trust too much to the Skill of Physicians, which is recorded as a Crime in *Asa*, 2 Chron. xvi. 12.

Since God to deter Men from placing their Trust in human Power, has described in a lively manner, *Psal. cxi. 3, 4.* the vanity and Impotence of that Power: let no one be offended that to conclude all, I set before the Eyes of Christians *what they are* in whose Knowledge they too often put their Trust, and on whom the Church of *Rome* commands them to rely; that they may plainly see and understand how dangerous 'tis to do so.

Whoever therefore you are, that think you may safely place your Confidence in other's Wisdom; if the Glory of God and the Salvation of your Souls be any part of your Care, Pause a while, and see *what they are* whom you confide in.

Perhaps they are *Hypocrites*, (of whom the World is full) and do not themselves believe what they impose upon the Faith of others; but only pretend Belief, in Hopes of Gain or Honour, and for fear of some Disadvantage, or Penalty, or Disgrace. There are Numberless plausible Reasons to suspect this of too many. Or perhaps He on whose Authority you depend, may himself depend on the Authority of some other, and He again on that of some other, and so on: and so both you and your Guides follow the beaten, but not the true Road. Or perhaps He who seems to You a *Guide of the Blind, a Light of them which are in Darkness, an Instructor of the Foolish, a Teacher of Babes*, is Himself Blind, in Darkness, Foolish and a Babe in Knowledge. Perhaps He who is called a *Master in Israel*, is himself ignorant of the necessary Means of entering into the Kingdom of God. Perhaps these *Watchmen are blind* and ignorant themselves. Perhaps they who sit in *Moses seat* are tainted with the Leaven which Christians

are to beware of. Perhaps the Prophets Prophesy a Lye, and speak a Vision of their own Heart, and not out of the Mouth of the Lord.

Jer. xxiii. 16. Perhaps they who go in Sheep's Cloathing, are themselves within no better than Ravenous Wolves.

You think you trust to Learned and Wise Men. But is it harder to Judge of a few Doctrines clearly revealed in the Word of God, than to Judge who is truly Learned and Wise, which perhaps even those you follow cannot do? Not all those who have the Reputation of Men of Learning have spent much time in improving their Mind, polishing their Wit, and sharpening their Judgment: 'Tis well for many if they have not lost their natural good Sense and Judgment in the Schools. Not all who have the Character of Learned Men can produce much out of their Store, that is of Service towards Judging in useful Points: They learn only what is curious and abstruse, and serves for Ostentation more than Use; and if they are to give their Judgment in any Case, they are not so much concerned to Judge according to Truth, as they are to take occasion to shew their Learning.

If an illiterate Man knew well the Person whose Doctrines He admires, He would often find He had but little reason to place so great Confidence in his Judgment. He would see that many of those who are cried up for Great Scholars, are no better than Gluttons, who by the great variety of the Meats they eat, deprave their Taste, and destroy the Tone of their Stomach; many others mere Rope-dancers, who chuse rather to Learn an Art that will make Men stare and wonder, than be of any real Service to the World; many, but Learned Misers, who are perpetually scraping together, and encreasing their Store, but are Strangers to the right Use of what they are heaping up.

To speak the plain Truth. What is called by the Name of Learning, is not that which is of chief Use, and most necessary for Judging in Matters of Religion. Which

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Which from hence is plain, that of all the numerous Sects of Christians, there is not one but can boast of several Learned Men : and since they differ so vastly in their Opinions, 'tis evident that the greatest part of Men of Learning, are notwithstanding their Learning mistaken in things of great importance ; at least they think them so.

To form a right Judgment in Matters of Religion, there are other things more requisite, and of greater Use; As,

I. *A sincere Love of Truth* : For they who receive not the Love of Truth that they may be saved, God sends them a strong Delusion that they should believe a Lye. And for this reason Christ says, Every one that is of the Truth, heareth my Voice. Now how few Learned Men are there, who have Truth more at Heart, than the Glory, the Reputation, the Advantage of themselves or their Party? How many bold the Truth in Unrighteousness? How few adhere to it merely because it is Truth? Would not most of them have employed their Parts and Learning, by which they defend the Truth, as they call their own Opinion, in maintaining the contrary, had they been of another Order or Society, been Born or Educated, or Admired in a different part of the World? If we would speak the Truth, Learning is generally a Weapon to defend a Man's self and Party, not an Instrument to discover Truth. But of Party-Attachment more by and by.

There is requisite,

II. *Piety and the Fear of God*. For what is to be judged of, is the Truth which is according to Godliness; Mysteries of Godliness. And is Piety to be looked for chiefly among the Learned? Or is not the Saying of *Austin* often true, 'The Unlearned arise and take Heaven by Force; and we with our Learning wallow in Flesh and Blood?' How often is that *Wisdom* the Unlearned so much admire, nothing but *Carnal Wisdom*, which is so far from

helping Us to form a right Judgment in Matters of Religion, that it is *Enmity against God*: is not *subject to the Law of God*, nor can be? There is requisite,

III. *Simplicity and Humility of Mind.* He who would profit in *Christ's School*, must first thoroughly imbibe this Lesson. *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of Heart.* None is here more fit to Judge, than He who is like unto little Children in Simplicity and Lowliness, and Ingenuity without Artifice, without Conceit: None fitter than He who has learned to *Cast down Imaginations* and every high thing which exalteth it self against the Knowledge of God, and to bring in to Captivity every thought to the Obedience of Christ. But can we look for such a Temper and frame of Mind from those, whom Knowledge puffeth up, who are Creatures of Glory and Ambition, of whom Christ asketh how they can believe, when they receive Honour one of another, and seek not the Honour that cometh from God only?

Add to this, that when Men grow Proud, and are puffed up with an high Opinion of their own *Wisdom*, it cannot be but they must fall into grievous Errors. For it makes them hasty in judging; rash in deciding; resolute in what they have once determined; violent in imposing their own Notions on others; scornfully obstinate against hearing their Adversary's Reasons; Deaf to Advice; and surly to those who advise them; incautious how they run into Mistakes; and if they ever do mistake, incorrigible.

But of all things requisite to Judge aright in Matters of Religion, there is nothing more so, than

IV. *A Mind free from Prejudice.* He who wants this, is like one who has not *Charity*; tho' He has the Gift of Prophecy, and understands all Mysteries, and all Knowledge, He is nothing.

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He sees as Men see Colours in the *Jawidice*; and that not only in things obscure and difficult, but in the very easiest, in which Boys would judge less amiss.

How much pre-conceived Opinions vitiate Men's Judgments, God has shewn us by a notable Example in his People. The Carnal and Worldly Notions imbib'd among the *Gentiles*, particularly the *Egyptians*, were the occasion of a Thousand Misfortunes to the *Jews*. God could scarce, if at all, during som any Ages eradicate them by the most amazing Miracles and the severest Judgments. At length the Messiah, so long expected and wished for, came unto them. But see! other Prejudices hinder them from knowing the Lord of Glory coming to his own. These weighed more with most of them, than the Accomplishment of all the Predictions of the Prophets in Him, than all his Miracles, his Holy Life, his Powerful Preaching, nay even than his Glorious Resurrection and Ascension, and all the Train of Miracles and Signs following. And the same
2 Cor. iii. 15, *Vail is even unto this day upon the Hearts of*
18. *that Unhappy People, and hinders them from beholding with us the Glory of the Lord with open face.*

And does this dreadful Example deter Men when they are to Judge in matters of Religion, from being biased by Prejudice? Nothing less: But every one, as those *Jews* did, holds fast the Opinions of his Fathers. This none do more than Men of Learning. Among them *Prejudice* has its Seat and *Empire*. And can it be otherwise, while nothing is reckoned more Scandalous and Dishonourable than for a Man to suspend his Judgment or ever retract one Opinion? †

* Vid. Ciceronem in Lucullo. [* Multi] ante tenentur adstricti quam quid esset optimum judicare potuerunt: deinde infirmissimo tempore atatis aut obsecuti amico cuidam, aut una alicujus quem primum audierunt oratione capti, de rebus incognitis judicant, et ad quamcumque sunt disciplinam quasi tempestate delati, ad eam tanquam ad saxum adhaerescunt.

Are not the Schools in many Places *Schools of Prejudices*; and the Professors in them too often like the *Pharisees*, who made the System of Traditions delivered down to them from their Ancestors, not a Human Comment on the Law, but the very Law of God, and declared all who did not judge conformably to it, an *accursed rout that knoweth not the Law*? Is not the Case of their Disciples often the same with that of the Learnedest of the Apostles, who imbibed such Prejudices at the Feet of *Gamaliel*, as made him not only incapable of forming a right Judgment of the Truth, but also a violent Enemy and Persecutor of it? It was necessary for Christ himself by a Miracle from Heaven, to remove the strong prejudices of Education contracted by this Vessel of Election: Many now a-days want as Miraculous a Cure of their Prejudices: They especially who make it almost the greatest of Crimes to pretend to examin the Doctrines their Masters have handed down to them; who measure the merit of Men's Faith by the more or less Absurd Opinions They believe, and the greater or less weakness of the Motives of *their* Belief; who then only think Men believe aright, when they believe without reason, nay believe what is most evidently contradictory both to Scripture and Reason.

Besides what has been already said, how very apt to corrupt Men's Judgments are the *Emulation, and Envy, and Suspicion, the Hatred and Anger, and Jealousy, and all those inveterate Passions* which reign so much amongst Men of Learning? The Understanding

*Nubila Mens
est, Vinclaq;
franſis, Hac ubi
regnant. Boet.*

‘certainly must be Clouded and Reason
‘fettered; where these Passions have the
‘upperhand.’ They deprive the most Judicious of that Clearness of Apprehension, that Easiness and Sedateness of Mind, that Candor and Moderation and Fairness, and that upright Intention, which are much more necessary to make a right Judgment, than the Knowledge of Languages, of History, of Arts, and the Abstrusest points of Learning. *These*

seldom

eldom are requisite in Judging; at most, in such Points only, as a Man may safely without peril of Damnation suspend his Judgment in: But *those* are absolutely requisite in every Judgment Men make on what Point soever, and so necessary, that without them Learning rather does Hurt than Good. But of all things that are apt to deprave and disturb the Judgments of the most discerning, what is more so than that Party Attachment, which has always prevailed among the Learned, especially in matters of Religion? Let any one account, why in some Points all Jesuits differ from all other Orders of Men: in others, All the *Franciscans* from all the *Dominicans*: All the *Sorbonists* from all the *Tramontanes*: And, not to be partial to the Protestants, all those who are called *Lutherans*, from all those who are called the *Reformed*: All the Professors of one Country or University from all those of another. 'Twould be ridiculous to account for this by the different Constitutions of Men's Bodies, Frames of their Minds, or Temperatures of the Air they breath. 'Tis Party Attachment, or I know not what is so.

As soon as any one joins himself to any Order or Body of Men, strait He adopts all the Opinions there professed: and to be sure on his own side there is no such Thing as Prejudice or Mistake, or Partiality, or Serving a Cause; on the adverse side there is nothing else.

Whenever I think of this, it brings to my Mind the ingenuous saying of *Optatus Milevitanus* to the *Donatists*,

* *Let no Body believe either You or Us, we are all Quarrellsome Men.* Candor not to be parallel'd in our Days! All sides now cry out in a very different strain, *Let no body believe the opposite side in any thing, but Us in every thing. They are all Quarrellsome Men, but not one of Us is so.* The most quarrellsome

* *Nemo vobis credat, Nemo Nobis: Omnes Contentiosi Homines sumus.*

of all can scarce ever prevail upon themselves to own even that they are *Men*, much less *Quarrelsome* ones.

When I see so much quarrelling among our selves about Things of no Importance in the World, I can hardly help pardoning this Zeal for a Cause in Papists: which certainly would be pardonable, were not the Glory of God and Salvation of Men's Souls concerned in it. They cannot be said to contend with us for Trifles, and Things of no great Moment. What the Pope and his Clergy earnestly contend for, is Supremacy over all the World, Irresistible Authority, and Immense Riches. How greatly must it serve their Cause to have their Church believed Infallible, the Pope Universal Bishop and Christ's Vicar upon Earth, and their Mass the most venerable and sacred thing in the World: To have Men believe that their Saints and Relicks, and Images are to be worshipped, and tremble at the Name of Purgatory, run in Troops to Auricular Confession; to obtain Indulgences and Dispensations, and relieve the Suffering Souls of the Deceased: To have them flock to particular Churches and Monasteries, with a full perswasion of the Truth of all the Legendary Miracles: And to dazzle the Vulgar with the variety, the particular Diets, unusual Habits and Austerity of their Monks? The Interest of the Clergy is much concerned in all these Points, that 'tis impossible they should judge impartially of them, unless they have a very extraordinary Love for Truth indeed, an uncommon disregard of private Interest and Glory, and so much Fairness and Ingenuity as is above the pitch of the Age we live in. No wonder they are so much in earnest for, and so warmly defend these Things, when Things in which Men's Interests are so much less concerned, are seen daily to blind the Eyes of the most discerning.

Should we be perswaded to what the Church of *Rome* is aiming at, to bid *Farewell* to our own *Judgment*, and make *Authority* our *Rule of Faith*: Yet the Doctors of that Church (they must pardon this plain dealing) would

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would by no means be the Persons on whose *Authority* we should chuse to rely. For 'tis so much their Interest to Judge just as they do; their Loss would be so great, their Penalty so severe if they judged otherwise; they attribute so little to the force of their own Arguments; they think Fear of Punishment so necessary to make their Doctrines be believed; they press blind Assent so much; they avoid and forbid all Examination so rigidly; their best Wits are so little at Liberty to alter any thing once determined wrong; they place so great stress on the Authority and Traditions of their Ancestors, Men not to be compared with themselves, and suffer themselves so much to be governed by Prejudice, that I can see no reason why, if I must rely on the Judgment of other Persons and not on my own, I should chuse to rely on theirs above all others.

I should think the Judgment of such Persons ought to be of most Weight and Authority, who cannot well be suspected to deceive or be deceived. The Grounds of such *Suspicion* are such *signs* as give reason to believe that He who Judges distrusts, or is not fully satisfied of his own Judgment: Or apparent *Causes* of his being deceived, or *Motives* to Him to deceive us. This made *Tacitus* to support the Credit of his History, say of Himself, That, 'He wrote without favour or dislike, without Obligations to, or Resentment against any of the Emperors.' If we would judge by these Rules, and not by others either disputed or wide of the purpose, of the *Judgment* and *Authority* of the *Romish* Doctors: They would find their own Cause perhaps even less served by this way of *Authority* than by the way of *Examination*.

But it is a way we have no regard at all to in the Choice of our Religion. How much soever Men may appear to us to be in earnest Lovers of Truth, however discerning, however diligent in examining, however free from Prejudice and Passion, however Candid and Sincere; yet it is neither safe nor necessary, to rely on them in matters of Conscience and Salvation. We have

the Word of God, in which we may our selves see all that is necessary to Salvation. If we pray aright, we may have the Assistance of the Spirit of God to enable us to see it. We have Teachers who without requiring a blind Assent, point out to us whatever is necessary to be known, and shew it us that we our selves may see it. If there are some Things in the Scripture which the Learned only can understand, God does not require of us who are Unlearned that we should believe *those things*. To conclude, how knowing soever the most Learned Men may be, They know nothing but what either We can Judge of for our selves, or may safely suspend our Judgment in.

Why then should we not rely on God alone, and on his Word, in what relates to Eternity? In this, if in any thing, God expects We should rely on Him alone. He who has made the *Mightiest* but *Weak*, that we might not too much rely on Man's *Power*; has also made the most *Learned* liable to a Thousand Errors, *Fallible and Fallacious*, that no one might put too much confidence in their Knowledge; but that all of Us who would be Christ's Disciples leaving the dangerous way of *Human Authority*, should hearken to our *only Master* Jesus Christ speaking to Us in his *Gospel*. He is the *Guide* whom they that follow cannot mistake their Way. He is the *Way*, the *Truth*, and the *Life*. To Him be Praise and Glory for Ever and Ever. *Amen.*

D I S-

DISCOURSE II.

A

LETTER

TO

Nicholas Wilkens of HAMBURGH,

AGAINST

The Authority of the Magistrate
over CONSCIENCE.

THAT no Man has a Right to compel any other to be of his Religion, has been so often proved from Scripture and Reason, and confirmed by the Authority of Wise and Pious Men, that to Write any thing more on that Topick may be thought superfluous. But because what may be superfluous, cannot be in any sort prejudicial; especially in a point, which, as long as any of the Faithful continue to be persecuted under the odious name of Hereticks, needs to be again and again inculcated: Permit me, Sir, to communicate to You my Thoughts upon it.

If any Man could have a Right to compell another by Penalties, to embrace the Religion He thinks true: He must have this Right, either from the *Consent* of the Person over whom He exercises it, or by *immediate Commission from God himself*. That no one can have such a Right *either way*, I hope clearly to demonstrate.

First, He can have no such Right either from *express* or *tacit Consent* of those over whom He would exercise it. For it cannot be supposed that any Man would give another Person so much Power over Himself, as to punish him for differing from him in Religion; or which is the same, to force his Assent. For this would be wholly to make all his Happiness or Misery consequent on a true or false method of Worship, depend on the Will of another Man; which 'tis incredible any Man would do. Such a Power no Man either *can* or *ought* to give another Man.

He *cannot*: Because 'tis not in his Power to believe all that He himself would believe if He could, much less all that another Person would have him believe. 'At the bare command or decision of another, says *Davenant*, no Man can believe, if He would never so fain. He may be silent and not contradict, or He may give a slight Assent, as *perhaps it may be so*: but to exert an act of Theological Faith, without the Information and Approbation of his Private Judgment is impossible.' 'Twas well said, by the Count of *Mirandola*, 'No one believes any thing to be true barely because He *will* believe it; for 'tis not in a Man's Power to make any thing appear true to his Understanding whenever He *will*.'

Nor *ought* any Man to give another such a Power over Him. Tho' every Man's Assent were so entirely in his own Power, that He could believe what Religion He would to be true; yet it would not be Lawful for Him to do this. For in this case a Man has not a Right over Himself, so as to believe what He *will*, or promise to believe what another commands Him. Every one must believe what God *Wills*, what He is

perswaded

persuaded in Conscience it is the *Will* of God He should believe. But least of all may a *Christian* promise to believe whatever another Person *will*, because by this means He hazards his *Eternal Salvation* on one Side, and can promise himself at best but *Temporal Happiness* on the other.

Neither has any Man a Right by *Immediate Commission* from God to compel another to his Religion. If God had given any Man such a Right, He would plainly have shewn He favoured Error more than Truth; to say which is no less than Blasphemy. For if Reason and Argument are to determine, Truth has the better of Error; for the Arguments for Truth are always the best. But if Force be called in, Error has the better of Truth, because Force is not always on the Side of Truth, but oftner of Error. Such a Right therefore would be an Advantage to Error and a Prejudice to Truth: If it be said that God has given Men a Right of Forcing others to assent to the Truth only, and not to Error; this does not make the Condition of Truth at all the better. For Error, which always usurps the Name of Truth, will also usurp the Right of using Force, and put it in Execution; which God can no otherwise prevent, but by either freeing the Mistaken from their Error, or taking from them the Power of Using Force: neither of which we know by the Experience of all Ages He ever does.

Besides, this Exception goes upon a Supposition that 'tis already determined all the World over, which of all the different Sects of Religion is the only Right one. This is indeed determined in my Conscience; and, as I firmly believe, rightly determined, so that without any scruple, I acquiesce in the Judgment of my Conscience. But this, I say, is not yet determined all the World over: the difference between me and those who dissent from me, who do not stand to the Judgment of my Conscience is not determined. The Question is how God would have these differences in the World determined. If by Argument without Force; Truth then prevails

vails or certainly will prevail at long-run. If by Force; then God declares in Favour of Error, which cannot be said without Blasphemy.

I have supposed all along in this Argument thus far, that a Man *could* possibly be forced to Assent, and *might* suffer himself to be Forc'd. But as neither of these Suppositions are true, 'tis plainly impossible God should any way give any Man such a Right. For He would plainly contradict himself.

1. He would have given one Man a *Right to Force* another to Assent: and yet on the other hand have made Man's Nature such that He *cannot be forced* by any External violence to assent. For whatever great things the most Powerful Monarch on Earth can do, yet let him unite all his Force, He can never extort from a Man such Assent: nay, what is more, not God himself by the Ministry of all his Creatures can cause that external Force alone without Arguments, or an internal Enlightning of a Man's Mind, should produce Assent in Him, unless He wholly alters his Nature. 'There is nothing,' * says *Lactantius*, in which a Man's own Will and Consent is so much concern'd as in Religion, (He might have said it of any Assent in general) in which if a Man's Mind is averse to what is done, it ceases to be Religion.

2. God would have given one Man a *Right to Force* another to embrace his Religion; and yet on the other hand have laid all Men under an *Obligation not to suffer themselves to be forced* in this Point. For who will deny that God both in his Reveal'd Word, and by the Dictates of Conscience and Right Reason requires of all Men not to embrace any Religion proposed to them before they are fully perswaded, and convinced that 'tis true, and from Him: and to be induced to such Belief by Reason and Argument only, and not by Human Threats

* *Nihil tam Voluntarium est quam Religio, in qua si animus sacrificium averse est; jam sublata, jam nulla est.*

or Penalties? And what is this but to *oblige all Men not to suffer themselves to be forced into any Religion?* How can He, who has thus *obliged all Men*, be said at the same time to have *given some Men a Right of Forcing others into their Religion?*

To make the Force of this Argument still more plain: If God would have Men compelled to embrace the true Religion; He would either have those compelled, who already know it is the true Religion, or those who at present think it is not so. The *first* is ridiculous: for to compel Him, who already acknowledges the Truth is needless. The *latter* is what God has prohibited Men to submit to under pain of Damnation, *viz.* to be forced against their Conscience into a Religion, which they believe in their Hearts to be false? God commands us to look on such a Man as a Tyrant, that usurps an Authority which does not belong to Him: to whom in this we owe no Obedience, but must without Fear of his Threats and Penalties, but despising them, continue Steady in the Opinion we believe to be true. What any one can reply to this I know not, unless He will say that Force is it self, a Means designed by God, by which Men should come to the Knowledge of the Truth, and be enabled to eschew Error; and that it has such a Vertue in it, as to make that appear true to a Man which just before appeared false: than which I know not whether any thing more absurd can be imagined.

The Papists, the great Advocates for Force, will perhaps answer, that this Argument is conclusive to Protestants †, who require all to examine the Articles of their Faith by their Private Judgment, before they assent to them: But that They are not concerned in it, who believe a blind Assent is due to the unexamined Decisions of their Infallible Church, and that 'tis just and agree-

† Such Protestants as Drs. Snape and Sherlock, are even with the Papists, and will have this Argument conclusive only against Papists, and not against Protestants.

able to Religion, to punish and compel by Force those who refuse it, as Rebellious and Disobedient. *

I own nothing is more contrary to the Principles of Protestantism, than Force in Matters of Religion; and that Violence much less becomes them, than the Church of *Rome*, whose pretended Infallibility in every respect Favours the Doctrine of Compulsion. But it does not from thence follow that *that Church* has a *Right* to use Compulsion, which is thus demonstrated. If I already believe it's Infallibility; I need no Force to believe all it's Decisions. If I do not believe it; I ought not be punished, because my Disbelief proceeds from ignorance of the Church's Infallibility, and not Disobedience to a Church I own Infallible. Am I to be punished merely for not owning the Infallibility of the Church? But it is impossible God should have given any Church a *Right to compel* me by force to believe this Principle; because the same God requires of me *not to suffer my self to be compelled* to believe it, but without fear of Man's Judgment, or Human Terrors, to disbelieve it, as long as it appears to me False or Dubious. God expects of me to examine thoroughly a Doctrine of such Moment, on which Salvation or Damnation depends, and in this Examination, neither to be influenc'd by Hope or Fear or Force, but only by the Evidence of Truth and Weight of Arguments.

The only answer the Papists can make to this, is, that this Doctrine it self, viz. 'That the Church which owns the Pope of *Rome* for it's Head, is Infallible,' is not to be examined into, but must be believed on the Authority of the Church, which declares it's own Infallibility: and that all are to be severely punish'd that will not submit to it. If this does not appear at first sight absurd to so many wise Men: truly they cannot only strangely captivate, but wholly renounce that Rea-

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son in Religious Matters, which they know very well how to exercise in all others.

It appears from what has been said, that no Man can have a Right of Forcing another in Religion, either from *His Consent*, or *Divine Commission*; and that therefore whoever claims such a Right is an Usurper. Whence it clearly follows, that all Actions which have any tendency to compel Men forcibly, and for fear of Punishment into a Religion never so true, or out of one never so false, however they may deceive the People, and carry a shew of *Justice*, are mere Acts of *Injustice*:

But I dare be bold to go further, and say that all such Actions, however *pious* some may think, or however *pious* the intent of some may be in them, are in themselves mere Acts of *Impiety*. For consider the Reason why another Man refuses to embrace the Religion you think true. He denies He can conscientiously do it, *i. e.* He is afraid of displeasing God if He does it. He Errs 'tis true, but as long as that Error lasts, He cannot do it without Sin. For He does in truth offend God, whoever does what He thinks will offend God. To compel a Man therefore to do what He thinks himself obliged in Conscience not to do, is to compel Him to sin and offend God; which cannot be done without *Impiety*.

And this is the very Argument the Apostles used to those who would by threats have compelled them not to preach Christ's Resurrection. *Whether it be Right*, say they, *in the sight of God to Harken unto you, more than unto God, Judge ye.* This Act. iv. 19. the Apostles said to those, to whom Christ crucified was a stumbling-block. They could not therefore have made them Judges in this Affair unless they intended these words to mean thus much: 'You who believe the Doctrine of Christ's Resurrection a Scandalous Imposture, forbid Us to preach it: But we are perswaded God commands Us to preach it. Judge you now what we must do while we are thus perswaded; whether we must obey You who bid us keep Silence, or God who

we believe bids us speak. We cannot think you so impious as to require us to offend God, that we may please You, or to regard your Commands, more than the Commands of God.

This Impiety will appear the greater by considering the means these Men of Force make use of to compel Men to Assent. A Man refuses to obey them out of Fear of God; of offending whom He is afraid, if He submits. This Fear is groundless: Be it so. It should be shewn to be so by Argument. Till that is done, the Fear of God must with-hold him from obeying their Commands. Now what do the Men of Force do in his Case? They have no regard to this Fear in those who dissent from them; They do not at all consider that it is God himself they fear: But while this Fear remains in their Hearts unremov'd, they oppose another to it to outweigh it there. And what now if that Fear they would have out-weigh the Fear of God, who is a consuming Fire, and of his Just Judgment? Even the Fear of a Man: the Fear of Human Power, of the threats and terrors of a groveling Worm. What is this but to require them to dread more a Man's Command than God's Prohibition; to stand more in awe of Human Wrath and Power, than the Divine Justice and Omnipotence; to be more afraid of their Terrors than of Damnation believed to be the consequence of deserting their Religion; and in short, without regard to the Punishments of God in this Life and the next, out of fear of evil Penalties to obey whatever is enacted by Man's Authority? What can be more

civil
directly contrary to Christ's Command,
Mat. x. 28.

'Fear not them which kill the Body, but are not able to kill the Soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both Body and Soul in Hell?'
If any Man could be converted by Force, of Him it might be said that *The fear of the Lord* was not the beginning of Wisdom in Him, but the Fear of Man, which drove the Fear of God out of his Heart.

In this View I cannot wonder that those who think it serves their Cause to force Men's Consciences should endeavour

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deavour by all the Disguise and Cunning they are Masters of to palliate a Doctrine so full of Horror.

Some deny that they can believe it to be out of Conscience and the Fear of God, that others will not submit to their Authority; 'tis, they say, a mere pretence and cover for their Disobedience. But what can we think of Men thus hard of Belief. Perhaps they are willing to get off by asking *What is Conscience?* as *Phile* by asking *What is Truth?* I own 'tis a great Crime in any one to adhere for frivolous Reasons to a Religion He believes is false, and make Conscience a Cloak for His Hypocrisy: But before such a Crime be laid to a Man's charge and He punished for it, it ought at least to be as clearly proved as other Crimes of the like heinousness, are, and ought to be in a Civil Court.

But this is commonly so far from being capable of proof that 'tis but of very, very few who profess a false Religion [especially if under Oppression,] that it can be suspected upon such presumptive probability, as would privately satisfy a fair and reasonable Man; much less such as ought to be admitted in a publick Court of Judicature. For who can help believing that the greatest part of those who profess any Religion whatever, are fully perswaded their own Religion is the best? This cannot be wondered at, if the Nature of Mankind, and the thousand Causes of Error be considered. Nor would there be any pretence for suspecting the contrary, if the odious Name of *Heretick* were not fixed on all Dissenters, and Cruelties used to them that loudly called for some Excuse.

The words of *Salvian* are worth considering. They are, says He, *Hereticks*, but not knowingly: They are *Hereticks* to Us, but not so to themselves. For they are so fully perswaded they are *Catholicks*, that they fix on Us the scandalous Name of *Hereticks*. What therefore they are to Us, we are to them. We know they do wrong to the Son, by making Him less than the Father: but they think we wrong the Father by advancing the Son to an equality with Him. The Truth is with Us, but they think it is with them. We truly Honour God, but they think their Belief does

‘ most Honour to Him. They are undutiful, but they think what we call them so for, the highest pitch of Duty. They are Ungodly, but they think, what they are so call’d for, the truest Godliness. Therefore they Err, but they Err with a good Conscience, not out of Hatred, but of Affection to God, believing that they Love and Honour Him. Tho’ they have not the right Faith, yet they believe what they have to be the perfect Love of God.’

‘Tis with the same view, that those who are persecuted are often represented not only as *Hereticks*, but as *Obstinate* ones. In this charge ’tis not easy to decide whom they term *Obstinate*. Is it those who persist in a Religion themselves believe to be *False*? Let this be as grievous a Crime as you please, but before it be *punished*, it should be proved by such Evidence as Crimes in Human Courts of Justice ought to be proved by. Or do they term those *obstinate*, who persist in a Religion, which, tho’ false, themselves believe to be *true*? This is only *Error*, not *Obstinacy*; or, if it be *Obstinacy*, what therefore is to be done with these Men, while they continue thus perswaded? Or are they *Obstinate*, who have had leisure, and means

See above. sufficient to have discovered their Religion to be false, and have not done it? This I own is a *Fault*: but before it be *punished* it should be proved by Evidence proper in Courts of Judicature, that it is such a Crime as *can* and *ought* to be taken cognizance of and punished at a *Civil Bar*. This seldom is thought of, when punishing Hereticks is debated. The only Question is, *What is the Error*, not *what the Motives* of first taking it up, or still persisting in it. But in Truth this Crime which is the Cause of Error, is not of such a nature as to be impeachable at a Human Tribunal: and besides, the true heinousness of it can be known to none but God. He only searches the Heart, and sees what lead Men into, and holds them in the Errors they profess. ’Tis safest for Us to pass no other Judgment than that of *Salvian*, ‘How Men will be punished at the day of Judgment for Erroneous Opinions, none but the Judge can tell.’

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Sometimes to palliate Barbarous Usage of them, Dissenters are painted as Disturbers of the Publick Peace. By which 'tis doubtful whether is meant ' That they really purpose to disturb the State, or That their Errors may and often do occasion great disturbances in it. The first, if duly proved, is a Capital Crime: The latter, tho' it be true, yet is not punishable; because, tho' the mistaken Person may in some measure be guilty, yet 'tis of a Crime not of a Civil Nature, nor cognizable by Man's Authority: Besides that it oftner happens that Disturbances in the State, proceed from an ill-tempered and imprudent Zeal in the Defenders of the Truth, than from those who are in the wrong.

But all these Colours, with which the Cruelty of Persecution is varnished over, furnish us with an Argument against it self. For, while to lessen the odium of Persecution, imaginary Crimes are fastened on the Sufferers, 'tis a Confession, that but for those Crimes they ought not to be persecuted: And of those Crimes they are to be reckoned Innocent in Human Judicatories, till they are proved against them by such Evidence as is requisite in all Criminal Causes.

But nothing betrays more the desperateness of this Cause than the last invented Evasion.† A Distinction is made between Force that is immediately applied to produce Assent, and That whose immediate design is to make Men Examine. They do not apply Force, they say, immediately to produce Assent: this they are not, they say, so mad to think either ought or can be done: but all that they design is by that means to make the mistaken Person carefully examine the Truth, which if He does, that Examination cannot but produce Assent.

This is indeed a new method of Teaching. The Learner is compelled to believe a Conclusion for fear

† I meet with this Distinction, first in Mr. Jonas Proast's Answer to the Argument of Mr. Lock's most excellent Letter, concerning Toleration p. 3. &c. Printed at Oxford 1696. Twelve Years before this Discourse was written. See Mr. Lock's Reply.

of Punishment, the design of which is only to make Him examine the Premises. Those, who hitherto have believed the Conclusion to be false, will by this means be rather frightened than perswaded to make a strict and accurate Examination: They will be afraid the falshood of the Conclusion (which if they could they would willingly believe) will appear *more evident* to them on a close Examination, and make it the more impossible for them to give that Assent which is necessary to avoid the Penalty. Are these Persecutors so blinded with Zeal as not to see there is a great difference between themselves and those they persecute? They because they believe their own Opinions true, hope that Examination will produce Assent. These others who believe it false, look on Examination not as the way to Assent, but as a Hindrance to it: and therefore the more desirous they are to avoid falling under the penalty; and the greater the penalty is they incur by not assenting, The less carefully and seriously will they examine the Doctrine imposed upon them.

'Tis a mere Blind and Juggle therefore, for Persecutors to say, They do not compel Men to *Assent* but to *Examine*. If this were all their meaning, why are not the Laws made in this case expressed in some such manner as follows: 'We enjoin you to *examine* carefully the Doctrine we propose, which done, you are to *Assent*, or *not Assent*, as you see *Evidence*; but that if you do this, you will see sufficient Evidence to Assent we make no doubt?' On the contrary they always speak in a much different Tone to this purpose: 'We enjoin you to *believe* the Doctrine we propose: 'Tis your business therefore to examine it, but so as not to fail of seeing the Truth of it; if you do, we enact such and such a Penalty.' And this, it seems, is not Forcing Men to *Assent*, but only to *Examine*!

But, you will say, 'tis impossible, the Truth, if rightly and thoroughly examined, should not gain Assent: Are not they therefore, who do not Assent to be supposed not to have rightly examined, and therefore punish-

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punishable? 'Tis awned, the Truth, if rightly examined, cannot fail to gain Assent; and therefore there is always some Fault or other in all that dissent from it. But 'tis a Fault that commonly is owing to Prejudice, and Habits thence contracted: And are these of a civil nature? How easily a Man may believe an Error, the grossest Error, *Astin* knew by Experience, who was long infected with the Heresie of the *Manichees*.

* But this He never thought a Crime of a Civil Nature or deserving punishment. Hear how when converted to Orthodoxy He bespeaks the *Manichees*. 'Let those,' says He, persecute You, who know not how difficult it is to arrive at Truth, how hard to keep clear of Error. Let those persecute you, who know not what a work of Labour it is to stifle carnal Imaginations by the calmness of a pious Mind. Let those persecute You, who know not with what difficulty the Eye of the inward Man is healed so as to be able to behold its Sun, &c. Let those persecute You, who know not what Sighs and Groans are necessary in any measure to understand God. Lastly, Let those persecute You, who never were themselves mistaken as they see You are: Then He adds, I ought to bear with You, with the same Patience as my Neighbours did with me, when I was a blind and furious Bigot for your Error.

But if Prejudices, and, as *Austin* calls them, *Carnal Imaginations* are what hinder the Erroneous from duly examining the Truth; to what purpose are Civil Penalties? Can they remove these Prejudices and Imaginations? Can they heal the Eye of the Inward Man so as to make it able to behold its Sun? Persecution will rather blind it; it will ruffle the calmness of a pious Mind; it will make Men averse and suspicious of the Truth, and less inclinable to assent to it. There is nothing in which a Man values Liberty more, than

* N. B. This Heresy of two independent contrary Principles, the one Good, the other Evil, was much more absurd to Reason and contradictory to Scripture, than any Opinions now generally condemned as Heresies.

in giving his Assent: In this case more particularly we are, as *Seneca* says, 'Like Mettlesome and free-spirited Horses, best managed with an easy Rein.' The best Arguments lose their Force, when they appear to be designed not to *perswade* but *extort* Assent. Christ, to prevent his Apostles forsaking Him, chose these mild Words 'Will ye also go away?' as the most effectual to *perswade* them.

This, Sir, is the Opinion of most Protestants concerning propagating Religion by Force; and it *necessarily flows* from the Principles they hold. Whoever will consult what my *Father* has wrote at large on this Subject, will find it there compleatly handled. I cannot help Smiling, whenever I think of that passage of *Martin Becanus*, where to the Question, 'Whether the Civil Magistrate may inflict Capital Punishments on Hereticks for bare Heresy,' He Answers, 'The Calvinists affirm it; the Lutherans deny it, we Distinguish. The Calvinists it seems are too cruel, the Lutherans too gentle, the Jesuits only are for Moderation! If any of the Reformed, provoked by the Madnes, the Blasphemy, the Deceits, the riotous Behaviour of some Hereticks (as *Austin* heretofore by the Villanies of the Circumcellions) may seem to have been too severe against them in their Writings or their Actions, which yet I here rather suppose than grant; yet this surely ought not to have been charged by the Jesuit on all Calvinists in general, whose Principles He could not be ignorant were entirely inconsistent with Persecution.

If any of the Orthodox Divines, Lawyers, or Philosophers think that in some Cases of Religion the Magistrate may sometimes draw his Sword, 'tis only in such Cases, when Mistakes in Religion are blended with other Crimes subject to Civil Cognizance. Whether that happens as often as is pretended, is a question of Fact, I shall not now determine. This is certain, they therefore only are of Opinion these Mistakes are punishable, because they think them necessarily attended with Criminal Effects, that beyond all doubt are the

punishable. But to avoid all Odium, it seems to me the safest way to distinguish the *Criminal Effect* from the *Error* it self, and say that no Man is to be punished in a Civil Court for mere *Error* it self, but only for other *Crimes* there Cognizable and proved by proper Evidence.

But as *Errors* are not to be heightened into *Crimes*, so neither must real *Crimes* be brought as low as *Errors*; which is the Answer I make to the Argument taken from the Penal Laws given the *Jews* against *Idolaters*, who should arise among the People, and seduce others to the same Sin. This was *Treason* of Subjects against their *Sovereign*. 'Tis notorious that in the *Theocracy* of the Holy Nation God was in the same manner *Sovereign* of the *Israelites* as *Alexander* was of the *Macedonians*. And therefore to desert from, and acknowledge any other King besides *Jehovah*, was just the same *Treason* in this People, as to Desert *Alexander*, would have been in the *Macedonians*.

But what if any of the *Israelites* had really believed the Gods, to whose Worship He seduced his Countrymen, were true Gods: Would God have commanded such a mistake in Religion to be punished? I answer: God at that time governed his People in such a sensible and visible manner, that His Subjects could no more be ignorant that *Jehovah* was their King, than the *Macedonians* could help knowing that they had no other King but *Alexander*. If this be not satisfactory, I say further, that we may suppose the Lawgiver of the *Jews* certainly foresaw that no one ever would commit *Idolatry* out of pure mistake, but always out of voluntary *Wickedness* and *Impiety*. For God was their Lawgiver, who was Omniscient, and could foresee all the Effects of his Laws; and also so Just and Good, that He not only would not deal hardly or injuriously by any, but even would not exact the utmost rigour in his just Punishments. The *Israelites* therefore could not be too severe in putting this Law in Execution: Especially when their King and Lawgiver was present with them

in so extraordinary a manner, that if in any instance it was thought too severe to inflict the Punishment, He might be consulted in it, and by his Prophets or his Priests, or some other way, stop the Execution. See Lev. xxiv. 10, &c.

Your Favourite Writer Grotius states this Case in his Notes on Matt. xiii. 41. 'Some, says He, defend the cruellest measures by the example of the Jewish Law. But to say nothing now of the different Spirit of the Old and New Law, I ask whom does that Law concern? Those only who with the most wicked Intent endeavoured to seduce Men from the One true God, that God whom Nature taught, and so many supernatural Miracles had more fully discovered to them. But most of the Articles of the Christian Faith are not known by the Light of Nature, but by Revelation from Heaven: And the Miracles that at first were wrought in Confirmation of that Religion, were designed † to confirm the Truth of the Religion in general, and not of such particular Articles as are now disputed, &c. I do not mean to excuse the Gaulonites and Theuda, who under pretence of Religion stirred up Wars and disturbed the State, or the Circumcellions in Africa, who practised Robbery, or any such like Persons: for Crimes are Crimes, whatever Name they are called by, and so much the more detestable, the more speciously they are disguised. But I would have Actions distinguished from Opinions which are not things equally in our own Power: And also a difference to be made between Opinions themselves either with regard to their Nature as they are more or less removed from true Piety, or to the Causes that lead Men into them. And in all doubtful cases the most favourable and best natured side is to be taken, lest

† See Bishop of Bangor's Answer to Committee, p. 177.

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we fall under that Rebuke of our Saviour, ' *Ye know not what manner of Spirit Ye are of.*

The Arguments for Compulsion and Punishment in matters of Religion taken from the *New Testament* are very trifling, and have been answered over and over. I wish the Answer were as easy to the Laws made by your *Emperors* against Hereticks. They do not all of them seem (with *Stephen Bathor*, King of Poland) to have placed *Dominion over Conscience* among those things, which God has reserved to Himself alone, as much as He has *Creation and Prediction*: at least they do not seem always to have well considered what was exercising *Dominion over Conscience*. I leave you, Sir, to explain or excuse as you think fit their severe Imperial Edicts.

If this be allowed, it will be said, then is the Orthodox Magistrate obliged to tolerate all manner of Errors in his Subjects? He is so indeed, if there be no other Remedy for them but *Force and Civil Penalties*. But I deny this is the only Remedy, I deny it is the properest, nay, I deny it is a Remedy at all. There is no consequence then in this Argument; 'The Magistrate may not extirpate Erroneous Opinions by *Force and Civil Penalties*: Therefore He must tolerate them.'

Christ came not to destroy Men's Souls but to save them; He would not have Fire called for from Heaven to consume the Samaritans; Did He therefore tolerate dangerous Errors? The Apostles professed the Arms of their Warfare were not Carnal: Did They therefore tolerate the Errors of the Jews and Gentiles which They were sent to extirpate? Did the Primitive Christians who knew how to suffer, but not to offer Violence, tolerate Errors? On the contrary, They, if ever any were, were irreconcilable Enemies of Error, which with unrelenting Enmity they warr'd with even to Death, attacking it with the greatest Vigour and Resolution, and defeating it with more Success than all the Power and Force of Man united, all the Inquisitors, Goalers, Rackers and Torturers in the World,

World, all the *Legions*, and *Armies*, and *Dragoons* that have been raised against Hereticks and Unbelievers ever did. Will those who maintain that every *Private Christian* is obliged to War perpetually with the Errors that are Enemies to Holiness, say that the *Orthodox Magistrate*, in this Case must lye still, and by his negligence suffer them to spread amongst People committed to his Care? the *Magistrate*, whose Example and Authority may be much more effectual to root them out than that of any *Private Man*?

How much may He contribute to the doing this effectually, if He takes due care that his Subjects be sufficiently instructed in the true Religion, so as not only to understand and retain in their Memories, but, what is of the greatest moment, to be fully and thoroughly satisfied and convinced of the Truth of the chief Heads of it? If He spares no Cost or Labour, that those who are appointed to instruct them both in the Churches and the Schools be in sufficient number, well qualified for those Offices and vested with sufficient Authority; that they be constant and faithful in discharging their Trusts, and by their Examples add weight to the Doctrines they teach; and that neglecting all useless, insignificant curious Questions, *the one thing needful* be every where insisted on, and inculcated both in private and in publick.

How much may He contribute to this, if He provides that no Person be employed in confuting Errors either by Disputation or in Writings, that is not signally qualified to do it: but such only, as perfectly understand the nature of the Evil to be cured, the source of it and the properest Remedy to be applied: Such as are not only able to shew clearly the weakness of Sophistical Reasonings and a false Opinion; but also by their pathetick Discourses, to remove the prejudices of the mistaken, and assuage those Passions which obstruct their seeing and embracing Truth: Such, in short, as come up to *Quintilian's* Description of an Orator, are *good Men* (I add good Christians, Pious, Gentle, Humble,

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ble, &c.) and Masters of the Art of speaking, that are well qualified by perswasive Arguments to convince Men of the Truth: by perswasive Arguments convince them, I say; not with Authority impose, or with Threats obtrude it on them? For nothing is more perswasive than Gentleness and Good Usage backed with solid Reasoning. By this *Noxianzen* glories of having brought over many Separatists to the Catholick Church, following without doubt the Divine Precept of St. Paul, *that the Servant of the Lord must not strive,* 2 Tim. ii. 24.
but be gentle unto all Men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves: 25.
if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the acknowledging of the Truth.

How much may the Magistrate contribute to this good Work, if He sees that Masters of Families do their Duties in giving their Children good Education and instructing their Domesticks: that so not only *Erroneous Opinions*, but *depraved Inclinations*, from whence *Hereses*, which are works of the *Flesh*, most ordinarily spring, may be early rooted out of their Minds? that Piety may there flourish in it's proper Province, which Christ expressly declares to be Job. vii. 17.
a great help to form a right Judgment of the Truth: And that the Love of Judgment and study of a Good Conscience may flourish and abound. Where these reign, idle Fancies and Dreams, which are so taking to Men of strong Imaginations and weak Judgments, find no admittance: those Fancies which by degrees deprave the Imaginations of the Weak, and hurry them to I know not what Extravagancies: from whence at last they proceed to *Fanaticism*, than which there is no evil in the Church more contagious or less curable: especially if the Malady be fed by *Declamations* against the Use of Reason in Matters of Religion, which makes Men be the better pleased with and the more applaud themselves, the more they see Men of Learning and Wisdom hiss at and despise them.

How

How much may the Magistrate contribute to this End, if He takes care that those who are designed for the Holy Ministry be early guarded by a *Love of Piety and Truth*, by *Humility and Modesty*, That all *Affectation of Nobility*, all *Ambition*, *Conceit* and *Self-sufficiency*, all useless *Curiosity* in their Enquiries, all *rashness* in making, and *obstinacy* in standing to their Decisions? that such as are so much overpowered by any of these Habits, that there is but little Hopes of their Amendment, be drawn off, as much as may be from these Studies: and especially that all Persons of arrogant, perverse, uneasy, violent, turbulent Spirits, be kept employed on things of another Nature.

But of all that a Religious Magistrate can do for the Service of Religion, nothing can more contribute both to prevent and cure pernicious Errors, than his removing all Scandals and things that give offence from the Catholick Church: every thing that renders it's Doctrines suspected to those who are without, and makes them conclude them false from the Fruits they see them produce, as well as some within complain, that no body believes them in good earnest, even among those who profess them. Here the Magistrate has room enough to shew his Zeal for Religion. Here Force and Civil Punishments may be inflicted. Here his Example, and his Laws may be of great Service, and have good Effects. By them He may provide that Ecclesiastical Discipline be duly regarded and exercised with a due Mixture of Severity and Moderation.

By this one Remedy the Attempts of most Seducers, who by a shew of Piety deceive others, and, which is much to be lamented, deceive those most who are most concerned at the practice of all manner of Sins and Vices, would be rendered ineffectual. The great support of *Fanaticism*, and of *Deism* and *Atheism* too would fall to the ground. For as long as so few live up to their Religion, *Fanaticks* will always be in the good Graces of the Vulgar, as Reformers of Christianity, and *Profane* Men will constantly insinuate that all

pre-

pretences to Religion are vain and Hypocritical, and that it is not really believed by any that profess it.

If the Magistrate by these and the like Means did all in his power to extirpate Error, would you say that He tolerated Error and Heresy? To me, it is taking the most effectual measures to banish them from the Church; when instead of forcing Men by Threats to silence, and by Penalties to play the Hypocrites in dissembling the Errors they believe; the Evil it self is struck at, and rooted effectually and for ever out of their Breasts. May not they with more Justice be said to tolerate Error, who by Persecution prevent only the outward Profession of it; the Error they leave still in full possession of Men's Minds? 'Tis here the poison lurks, and hence must be expelled, if we would do any thing to the purpose. 'Tis ridiculous for Him, who cannot do this, to assume the Title of a Converter. He does not take away the Evil, but establishes, nay, encreases it, and involves those who before were only in an Error in the guilt of Impiety too, by doing what their own Conscience tells them is a Sin.

There are not, it seems, Hypocrites enough in the Church already: care must be taken that it may swarm with such sort of Vermin. Who does not see how easy the transition is from hence to Atheism and every kind of Wickedness? What good can be expected from such Men when they have once broke down the Bar of Conscience, and forswore That Faith they looked on as the thing most Sacred in the World. 'Tis a mistake to think their Impiety will stop here. 'For (as the Poet says) 'who ever set any Bounds to his Sins, when once He had laid aside Shame and hardned his Conscience? Will such a Man stop at one single Villany?

Nam Quis
*Peccandi finem posuit sibi, quando recepit,
 Ejectum semel attritâ de mente ruborem?
 Quisquam hominum est, quem tu contentum videri Uno Flagitio?*

But

But Christ neither delights in, nor wants the Cruelty of Men to support the Purity of his Religion. There are other Weapons, as we have seen, (and the wise may discover more) in the Armory of the Israelites to employ against Error with much better success. He who does not rely on these, must be ignorant how Christianity made it's way in the World, and unacquainted with the Force of Truth. If with these we courageously make the Attack, we shall not need the help of Force: God will bless and prosper the lawful Means appointed by himself. If we neglect these, Force will not stand Us in stead: nay, the more we neglect them, the more unjust the Force we employ will be. For when we wou'd patch up with Penalties the Rents and Schisms occasioned by our neglect, we act just like an Idle careless Schoolmaster, who Chastises with blows and stripes, the Ignorance of his Scholars, of which He is himself the Cause, and ought principally to be punished for. And as such a whipping Pedagogue by his Tyranny makes not his Scholars more Learned but more Stupid, and averse to Learning, so these terrible Inquisitors by their threats and penalties make not one Man more Religious, but put many out of conceit with their Religion. Accordingly we see by Experience that there is the least true Religion, where Men are the most rigidly compelled to the *Established one*. And 'tis no wonder the Christian Religion does not produce in many Countries the Fruits it ought to do, and once did. It is, alas! no longer believed in earnest! And indeed how should it? It is no longer recommended by *persuasive Arguments*, but imposed by *Force*.

What can be a greater disgrace to Christianity than so to defend it, as if we thought it could not be propagated, nor preserved Pure, without Force and Violence? Does not this give all the World reason to suspect that all it's Votaries are so by *Force*, none by *Conviction*?

I cannot enough admire, that the Romish Doctors while they are continually insisting on the Topick of *Authority*, are not sensible that this thing alone is enough

to shake, nay, overturn all the *Authority* of their Church. I own there are many *Men of Parts and Learning, of great Virtues and improvements of Mind in that Communion.* And who would not be swayed by the *Judgment* of such a number of Great Men, were their Judgment but *Free*? Who would not have great Regard and Deference for the *concurring Sentiments* of so many Men of note, if they were free to chuse whether they would *concur* or not?

But their *Authority* loses all it's weight with me, as soon as I consider, that they dare not but adore all the Decisions and Ordinances of the Church: when I reflect not without the deepest concern that so many of the Learnedest Men in the World are not at Liberty, without running the greatest risque imaginable, to depart from any one thing that has been formerly defin'd by Men of no Learning, and in no respect to be compared with *Them*. When I see that the utmost Glory, Learning and Application, for which our Age is famous more than all that have gone before, can ever attain to, is That of Submission and Obedience: And that they can be employed in nothing but palliating abuses and colouring over Superstition introduc'd by Unhappy Barbarous Ages: when I see what Losses and Penalties any one certainly incurs who dares attempt to shake this Foundation on which the Fabrick of the Church of Rome is built; *'that during the grossest Ignorance of so many dark Ages, it always continued Infallible in it's Decisions of Articles of Faith.* When I consider all this and more, Pardon me, ye Learned Doctors of the Church of Rome, if in this View, your Judgments do not weigh so much with me, as they would do if they were freer. Let your Church once remove this Terror, this Sword that hangs over your Heads and awes You; and your Authority will be every where much regarded. Why does it boggle at doing this? does it distrust your Apprehension or your Integrity? does it distrust it's own Arguments explained and set in the fullest Light by the labour and pains of its greatest Genius's? does it distrust it's own

Authority, which is, it seems, so plain, that the dullest Mortals who are entirely unqualified to examine into Religion, yet cannot help seeing and feeling *that*? Does it distrust it's own Antiquity, Continuance, Splendor and *Uninterrupted Succession* of it's Bishops? it's Perpetuity so solemnly ascertained to it by Christ? and the Series of Miracles continued in it down to the present times? Are not the *fifteen Notes* of a true Church so clearly discovered in it by the Great Bellarmine sufficient to keep Men in it's Subjection? Are all the *established Prejudices* by which alone Hereticks are condemned without Examination, together with all the witty and ingenious contrivances to convince them, insufficient for this End? Further still: Are all the *Benefices*, the *Privileges*, the *Preferments* in Possession or in Prospect; are all these too insufficient to keep Men in the Catholick Faith? Is the *Fear of Punishment* over and above all these so necessary? Is the *Catholick Faith* in so bad a plight, as to want as great, nay greater Barbarities to support it, than to support *Mahometanism*? Is this then the *Firm Rock*, on which your Church is built: this it's Security from the Gates of Hell prevailing against it? I must tell you, all the World is convinc'd that you *thus* think yourselves. Pope Paul the Fourth openly avowed it, who at the Point of Death, when the Mask is off, and we generally speak from our Hearts, recommended to the Cardinals the Holy Office of the Inquisition as the **ONLY MEANS OF PRESERVING THE CHURCH**; and begg'd of them to establish it all over Italy. Ought the *Authority* of this Church, which cannot stand but by the help of Force, be of so great weight [as to determine our Faith against Reason, Sense and Scripture?].—

But whether am I launching? how impertinent is this Digression in a Letter to a Friend? Pardon me, Sir, I forgot I was writing a Letter; the usual length too of which I see I have much exceeded. I conclude it with the wise and pious saying of *Maximilian the Second*. He said, that 'He did not claim an Empire over Conscience, which

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‘ which was the Prerogative of God alone, and that He thought no Sin greater than to attempt it.’ And that those who pretended to it, invaded the Dominion of Heaven, and for it not seldom lost their Power on Earth, to their Eternal Shame and Disgrace to all Posterity.

You have, Sir, my Thoughts on this Topick. In so long a Letter, in nothing perhaps like a Letter, but it’s want of exactness, no doubt you will see I have often nodded. But you correspond with a Man who will neither Force others, nor You to agree with Him; and who if He makes any mistake, needs not to be Forced by any, much less by You, to correct himself. Reason is Inducement sufficient, especially backed by your Authority. Farewel, and keep this Letter, such as it is, if you shall think it worth while, for a perpetual Token of my Affection to You.

Bale. Feb. 7. 1702.

P O S T S C R I P T.

I Forgot to mention one Argument against Force, which will, I know, Sir, be of great weight with You, viz. ‘ That it is the greatest obstruction possible to the Advancement of Learning: as appears from the Barbarity that reigns in all those Countries where the Inquisition flourishes.

Their Tyrannical Prohibition and Destruction of Books are one great hindrance to the Encrease of Learning But there is a further Reason: For, as Tully says, ‘ the Sister Arts have all some common tye, and are joyned together as it were by a near Relation to one another.’ By all

Liberty of Judging therefore being forbid under severe Penalties in Divinity, the same Liberty must by degrees decay in all other Arts, in Philosophy, History, Criticism, &c. especially now Divinity is so much blended with all other Sciences, and the Counsel of the Great Lord Bacon so little regarded, 'To give un-
' to Faith the things only which are Faith's,' and the number of Articles of Faith by the Abuse of Ecclesiasticks every day encreasing; a Right to do which is now openly claimed in the Church of Rome. Who, when all Liberty is restrained, will heartily apply himself to Studies, in which if He departs one Inch from the Road chalked out by Authority, He must expect the extremity of ill Usage? Learning will have no Voluntaries, if there is such hazard in it. Farewell to Letters, if safety is to be had only in Blind Assent and Ignorance, if Fear once gets such an Ascendant over Men, as 'tis said to have in Spain, 'where there is a perpetual silence in Matters that any way
' concern Religion,' (and what may not the Holy Office make some way or other concerned in it?) 'and for fear of happening some time or other to drop any thing undesignedly
' about it, Men forbear ever to think at all of the
' Matter,

Does this Argument, Sir, affect You? Does not Force seem to you something Horrid? To You, who love nothing more than Learning, nor hate any thing more than Barbarity. I could not but add thus much. Once more Farewell.

See *Histoire
de l'Inquisition.*
on. p. 233.

DIS-

DISCOURSE III.

SOME

General Considerations

CONCERNING THE

Reuniting of Protestants.

THERE is no Protestant who does not own that the Reuniting the different Sects of Protestants would be a Work not only excellent in it self, and very acceptable to God, but also of great use, and say the utmost necessity to preserve the Protestant Churches, and promote the Kingdom of Jesus Christ in these troublesome and dangerous Times. But at the same time 'tis as generally agreed, that 'tis a work extremely difficult, not to say entirely impossible, and one of those things which tho' much to be wish'd for, yet there is little hope of accomplishing.

The Reason of this is, the greatest part of Divines give themselves no further trouble about it, believing they may spend their time and labour much more usefully some other way, than in a project of which they cannot promise themselves any success.

Nevertheless, since the Impossibility Men have imagined of such a Reunion proceeds more from the bad
Suc

Success of the pains they have hitherto taken, than from their seeing clearly any unconquerable difficulties in the thing considered in it self: To help clear up this matter, I have drawn up in a few Words some Considerations on it; in which the two following Heads are stated.

1. What that Reunion of Protestants is which we should endeavour to establish.

2. What is necessary to be done for that End.

I. This Reunion neither *can* or *ought* to be made to consist in bringing *all fides* to an entire Uniformity of Doctrine, which never was, nor ever can be among Christians.

1. Because of the great difference, nay contrariety there is between Men, arising from their different Constitutions and Inclinations, the different Gifts with which God has blessed them, their different Educations, Opportunities, Leisure and Means of Instruction; as well as of the great Prejudices and Passions to which Christians are as liable as other Men.

2. Because tho' the Holy Scripture (besides which Protestants allow no Judge) be indeed sufficiently clear in all things necessary to Salvation; yet it does not formally decide all other Questions, which are often useless, and matter only of Curiosity, and about which Christians may as well differ, as other Men about any other Points of the like nature.

3. Because the Principle of Protestantism, on which the Reformation is wholly and solely built, is that every Christian has a Right to examine all Doctrines proposed to Him, without submitting blindly to any Human Authority. But to pretend to bring all Christians to an Uniformity of Opinion in all Articles, would be to deprive them of this Right, and exact blind Obedience of them, as the Church of Rome does: Nay even to go beyond that Church, which does not so strictly subject Men's Consciences, but that a very considerable difference of Opinion is allowed of in several Articles.

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The Unity of Christians therefore, and especially of Protestants, must consist in something else, and be established on such a foot, that it may subsist notwithstanding these inevitable differences. And in a word, it can consist in nothing but this, That Protestants of all sorts should look on those Differences as unavoidable Inconveniencies that can never be banished from among Christians, and bear with one another in them as Christianity requires, and as Men bear with one another in other Human Frailties; that so this Diversity of Opinion may not hinder them from owning and loving one another as Members of the same Spiritual Body, and as Brethren; and that this sincere and truly Christian Union being deeply rooted in their Hearts, they may profess it publickly before the World, not only by all Acts of Charity and Brotherly Love, but especially by making but one Communion and partaking together of the Lord's Supper, the most lively sign of the Communion of Christians.

This is in short the Notion which I think Men ought to have of a Reunion of Protestants.

II. It will now be asked 'How such a Reunion may be compassed. I answer: It all depends on this single point, *That all sides should acknowledge they are obliged in Conscience to join in such an Union.*' Were Men of all sides perswaded of this, the difficulties that are apprehended would instantly vanish. To determine whether all Protestants are so obliged, we need only to be convinced of this one Truth, *That those of all Communions, as well those who in the present diversity of Opinions are in the wrong, as those who are in the right* (which are so I do not now determine) *notwithstanding their Erroneous Opinions, continue true Members of the Church of Christ.* For if notwithstanding these Opinions they are in earnest, and to all intents and purposes true Christians; 'tis as clear as the Light that we are obliged in Conscience to own and acknowledge them for such; as such to hold Communion with them, and signify it openly to the World, and that without delay, and without relapse.

I say expressly, *we are obliged in Conscience to this.* 'Tis not enough to own that this would be a very good thing, or might be done with a good Conscience: It is further necessary, either to own this Reunion is an Indispensable Duty that may not be left undone, nor deferred a moment without greatly offending God and Christ our common Head; or to profess downright, and in plain Words, that we do not hold those Protestants, who are in the wrong in some controverted points, to be true Christians. For if they be true Christians, let them hold as many, and as great Errors as 'tis possible for true Christians to hold (and true Christians are not Infallible,) yet they make together with those whose Doctrine is more pure, but one Church, and one Spiritual Body, and therefore cannot with any shadow of Justice be debarred the External Communion of the Church. This appears to me decisive, unless it be said that our Lord has given *Us* a Right, *Us* who are but Men, to make a difference between the true Members of his Kingdom, and to receive to Communion such only as agree with us in all things, excluding and cutting off from his Mystical Body and Church, at least externally (which is all we can do) many who continue true Members of Him, and whom He owns as such; cutting them off, I say, for every difference of Opinion, and whatever we think an Erroneous Tenet. But this I cannot think any true Christian will say.

On this one Point then all depends, That Protestants of *all sides* will clearly and sincerely, without Prevarication or Disguise, answer the Question just now proposed. I repeat it again: 'Tis, not which Sect is in the right, which in the wrong; but, 'what we are to think of those who are in the wrong, whether, notwithstanding their Errors, they are to be looked upon as true Christians or not.

Of those, who answer they are to be looked upon as true Christians, I desire only, that following the Dictates of their Consciences they would *Act* according to what they acknowledge to be right with their Heart

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and Tongues. And then so far the Point is gained, and the Reunion compassed. There is no need of entering into further Consultations, of framing Schemes, and contriving Conditions of Peace, or inventing means of reconciling Opinions that appear to contradict each other. With this bare Profession the Peace is made, the rest will follow necessarily and of Course.

But if any be found, who will answer that they cannot acknowledge any Man for a true Member of the Church of Christ, who thinks not as they do in the controverted Points: These Men must build this Judgment of theirs on one of these two Principles.

Either that such a Man cannot be a true Member of Christ, tho' He sincerely *believes* all that is held in common by *all Parties* of Protestants, and *Practises* accordingly.

Or, that He cannot sincerely *believe* all that is held in common by *all Protestants*, nor consequently direct his *Practise* by such Belief.

The *first* of these is easily, and in few Words confuted. 'Tis but to rehearse briefly all those Points of Doctrine in which *all Protestants* agree, all the Articles of their Worship, Publick and Private; all the Parts and Acts of True Faith; Repentance and Charity, and in a Word, all the Duties of Christianity which are by *all* agreed on: And then to put the Question to any one who knows what being a Christian is, whether any one who heartily *believes* all these things, and endeavours to the utmost of his Power to *live* up to them, is not to be owned a Christian. There will not be found, I do not say any Wise and Prudent Divine, but, any Man of common Sense and Reason, who will exclude such an one from the Number of true Christians; tho' His other Opinions be ever so Erroneous: Unless He hold such Errors, as God himself in his Word has expressly excluded Men from his Church for holding; which undoubtedly one Sect of Protestants will never be able to prove of another.

To come then to the other Principle, That those who are in the wrong in Points controverted among Protestants, are by those Errors incapacitated from heartily believing and practising what all Protestants believe in common. This ought to be proved by Experience to be Fact: But there is not the least sign whence it can be guessed with any shadow of likelihood that the *Fundamental Articles* and *Essential Duties* of Christianity are more sincerely believed, or more carefully practised by one side than another.

The contrary is manifest from the truly Christian Lives of many good Men of all Denominations; from the constancy and devoutness of their Religious Worship both publick and private, pure and free from all Idolatry; from their Christian and Edifying Deaths, and particularly the Deaths of those who spilt their Blood, and suffered Martyrdom in maintenance of the Truths received in common by all Protestants, and who have given many other incontestable proofs of their Faith, their Trust in Christ, and sincere Piety; by which we may be as sure as Men can or need be, in forming any Judgment, that they were truly Pious and feared God.

Let any one read the Prayers and Hymns, and Spiritual Meditations, and Books of Devotion that are used both by the Lutherans and the Reformed [the same may be said of all Denominations of Protestants] and which they read to encourage themselves in a Pious Life, and to prepare themselves for Death: And He will find that they contain all the Essentials of Christianity. And if so, of Necessity it must be plainly affirmed, either that all of this, or that Denomination, who under pretence of Spiritual Improvement make use of these Prayers, and Hymns, and Confessions of Sin, these Acts of Faith and Devotion which are used in common by all Protestants, are no better than Hypocrites; or it must be allowed, that those who are in the wrong in points on which all are not agreed, may notwithstanding be true Christians.

Indeed

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Indeed did any one Protestant Church believe, and avow the Consequences charged on their Tenets by others, Christianity would be in a bad Condition on *all sides*. But this is not so: No Society admits the Consequences fixed on their Tenets by their Antagonists, but reject them with Detestation and Abhorrence.

It cannot be said that the Consequences others draw from what we hold, are our true Opinions: Nor can any thing but what we *expressly profess* our selves, and own as our real Sentiments, be charged upon us. The Damnable Heresies others deduce as the Consequences from our Opinions can have no ill effect on Us, as long as we look on them as Heresies, and false Doctrines [and do not own them as fair Deductions from our Tenets;] much less could they obstruct our being Pious, Tho' the Learned should by the true Rules of Logick demonstrate, they follow from our Principles. For instance, could any one infer from any Sentiments of mine by true and just Reasoning, that Prayer is an useless thing; as long as I reject this Consequence with abhorrence, the Heresy thus inferred, neither affects my *Belief* of the efficacy of Prayer, nor my *Practise* of that Duty, nor hinders my Prayers from being heard.

These Consequential Deductions may shew that a Man is mistaken, that His Opinions are not well-grounded, nor He a solid Reasoner; but they will not prove that He is therefore no Christian, if He be one practically and in earnest; He cannot therefore fairly be charged with not believing what He heartily believes; with not disowning what He really disowns; or with not practising what He in his whole behaviour endeavours to put in practise.

If therefore there be any among Protestants, who are not afraid to exclude from the number of true Members of Christ, those who in *disputable* Points are in the wrong; and to exclude them barely for that reason: I cannot imagin on what they found so hard and rigorous a Judgment; or how they can be satisfied in their Consciences, that 'tis not uncharitable, rash, and directly

contrary to that, which Jesus Christ our common Head passes on these same Men. If we cannot be fully satisfied of this; Christian Charity, nay, even Equity and Justice require, that we should own for true Christians, and true Members of the same Mystical Body, all who agree with us in *believing* the Essential Articles of Christianity, and who direct their *Worship* and their *Practise* by that Belief: And we are indispensably obliged publickly, and by our Actions to make it appear we do own them for such.

Two Inconveniencies may perhaps be apprehended from this Reunion. The *One*, that it will much endanger the Purity of Christianity, for its Votaries to communicate with those who in some Points are mistaken: The *other*, that Diversity of Opinions in the same Society will breed great Confusion and Disturbances. I answer

First, If one considers the great Evils that the Unhappy Schisms among Protestants have from the first been, and still are, and if they are not healed, will always continue to be the occasion of in the Church; it will be owned that all the Inconveniencies that can be imagined in such a Reunion, are comparatively nothing. An excellent Author * has with great Eloquence and Force described these Evils in a Latin Discourse in Print, upon this Subject. 'Tis enough to make one tremble to reflect seriously on them. Could the Devil have any way done more mischief to the Church, than in putting a stop, as He has done, by this unhappy Division of Protestants, to the propagation of the Truth; in resettling tottering Popery; subduing many considerable Churches to its Yoak again, and exposing still more to the same danger? And, what ought to be lamented with Tears of Blood, what greater mischief could befall the Church, than to see so many Thousand Christians, who have so long on account of these Divisions made what is Essential

* Turretinus in Orat. de Dissidiis Protestantium componendis.

in Religion, a mere Circumstance; and what is Circumstantial, Essential: Who employ themselves wholly in Scandalous Controversies, and altogether neglect not only Christian Charity, but all the other Articles and Duties of Religion? (not to alledge all the wicked Passions and Vices, which are the effects of this unfortunate Division, and the causes of great Disturbances.) I ask, Whether all the Inconveniences that can possibly attend the Reunion of Protestants deserve once to be compared with the mischiefs I have described.

But be these Inconveniences as considerable and as many as they will, this will not excuse our being averse to a Reunion. For this is not a thing indifferent, that may be done or let alone just as is most convenient for the present Circumstances: 'Tis a necessary Duty, to which all the Members of the Church, who make but one Body, are obliged in Conscience, whether they agree in all their Opinions or no. 'Tis a Duty, that must inviolably be performed. And as for any Inconveniences, we must do what we can to guard against them; if all we can do be insufficient, we must believe that, provided our Intention be sincere, Christ our Head, who enjoins Union to all his Members, will himself contrive ways to hinder the Inconveniences we fear.

Secondly, As for the Purity of Christian Doctrine, the Reunion will expose it to no hazard. On the contrary there is fair room to Hope that when the Spirit of Party, and all the Passions it brings along with it shall be banished from the Church, Truth will appear more pure, and in a better Light, and the greatest part of Christians heartily and joyfully imbrace it.

For the present, this Reunion of Protestants must consist, as we have shewn, chiefly in this, that they bear with those, who they think hold erroneous Opinions; that is, without regarding those Opinions, publicly own them for Brethren, and Members of the same Body. But the Union must not extend to approving their Errors, nor hinder any one who thinks others are in Error from

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the Right of establishing Truth, and confuting the contrary, as far as the Glory of God and Edification require it; provided it be done with Prudence and Discretion, and in proper time and place. And whereas in the present State of things this has been often done out of a pure Spirit of Party and inveterate hatred against those of a different Opinion, with bitterness and ill nature and often with taunting and sharp Language calumny and ill usage; by which means it never had the least good Effect: On the contrary, if the fatal Divisions of Protestants were once healed, we might hope that the Truth would be defended with no other view but the pure *Love of Truth*; that it would be established only on *clear Principles*, and this done in a good-natured, peaceable and modest Manner. Thus it would by degrees get the upper hand and necessarily triumph over Error.

As for the other Inconvenience, the Fear of **CONFUSION** from Diversity of Opinions in Members of the same Church: There might be good Rules made to regulate publick Teaching in Churches and Schools, and about Writings and Books, and whatever else is necessary; which would sufficiently prevent all Confusion, provided no Violence were offered to Consciences, and that the free Course of Truth and Piety were not obstructed.

But Christ, the Head of the Church, has furnish'd his Members with Means abundantly sufficient to prevent all Confusion that could arise from difference of Opinion; by inculcating so often and so expressly by himself and his Apostles, Charity, Humility, Gentleness, Patience, Bearing with one another, seeking after Peace, and all other like Virtues which contribute to maintain Union; and above all, by commanding his Ministers to show themselves Examples and Patterns of all these Virtues to their Flocks and their Disciples.

Did Men once observe these Means prescribed by Christ himself, every difference in Doctrine would not so readily breed Confusion among Christians: The Principal Cause of which is not Difference of Opinions which is unavoidable, but the Want of the above named Vir-

tues.

ues. 'Tis this makes Men not *bear with* those that differ from Them. But more especially 'tis the Want of Christian *Humility*: For if this Capital Virtue, which is the Soul of Christianity, reigned in our Hearts, we should not be so ready to think it an intolerable Affront and Slight in any to refuse to be of our Opinion in all Things: Much less should we exalt our Selves above our Brethren, and because we conceive that we think and judge in some Points more rightly than they, for that Reason conclude presently that we are more perfect Christians than they are: but we should consider that we too are Men, liable to Error, and perhaps our selves mistaken in some other Points of as great or greater Importance; and that there are many among those that hold the wrong side of a disputable Question, who much surpass us in the more important and more essential Points of Christianity: Our own Faults and Defects would appear to Us more considerable than some erroneous Opinions we see in our Brethren; notwithstanding which, as experience shews, they may be true and good Christians: and instead of being so ready to shut Heaven against others, and exclude them from the Number of the Faithful, we should think ourselves happy enough if we could ourselves partake of the Divine Mercy; if our Saviour would suffer us in his Communion, and grant Us an Entrance into his Glory, notwithstanding the many Weaknesses and Faults and Sins that we are guilty off.

FINIS.

THE false Notion of a *Christian Priesthood*
and the Pretences to Sacerdotal Oblation
Intercession, Benediction, and Authoritative
Absolution, examined and confuted: Being an
Answer to Mr. Law's Second Letter to the Bi-
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ERRATA:

Page 4. Line 2. for *sepus* read *Scopus*. p. 10 l. 12 for *on r. in*.
l. 28. for *nolumus r. nolumus*. l. 36. for *fassit r. for sit*. l. ult.
dele the Comma after *Fontem*, p. 22 l. 11 for *had r. has*. p. 26. l.
2 dele the Comma after *Formal*, p. 35 l. ult. for *sesne r. sense*. p. 36.
l. 1. after *self* insert *to be*. l. ult. dele *to*. *ibid.* for *motive r. motives*.
p. 38 l. 4. for *stated r. started*. p. 44 l. 2. for *loves r. love*. p. 41
l. 7. for *without r. with*. l. 8. for *Consent r. cry out*. l. 22. for *raving*
r. roving. p. 45 l. 28. for *needing r. heeding*. p. 53 l. 3. for *precluding*
r. precluded. p. 57 l. 11. 12. for *command r. commands*. p. 59 l. 25.
dele *a*. p. 63, l. 1. after *Judging* for, put; p. 64. l. 25. for *is much r.*
in so much. p. 72 at bottom for p. 7. r. p. 4. p. 74. l. 17. for *if r.*
in. l. 28. for *evil r. civil*. p. 77. l. 15. for *furnishes r. furnish*. p.
79. l. 22. dele? p. 85. l. 36. for *makes r. make*. p. 86 l. 4 for *that r.*
against. p. 94 l. 32. dele? p. 99. l. 15 after *Pious*, for; put, p.
101. l. 5, after *Religion*, for, put?